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# THE MONASTIC CHRONICLER AND THE EARLY SCHOOL OF ST. ALBANS

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# THE MONASTIC CHRONICLER AND THE EARLY SCHOOL OF ST. ALBANS

*A LECTURE*

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BY

CLAUDE JENKINS

*Professor of Ecclesiastical History, King's College, London*
*Lambeth Librarian and Chaplain to the*
*Archbishop of Canterbury*

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# The Monastic Chronicler and the Early School of St. Albans

## I

Six hundred years ago, in the second decade of the fourteenth century, the great Italian poet whose fame the world has just been celebrating anew, saw in that Paradise of elect souls of every age and clime which is described in the last section of the *Divina Commedia*,[1] the radiant spirit of a great Englishman who was also perhaps the most famous of monastic historians. The six centuries that separated Dante himself from the time of the Venerable Bede were charged even beyond bearing with those happenings in national and local life which are the materials of history. It is these which the annalist records and the chronicler describes and illustrates with reflexions and stories grave or gay, a comedy of manners if sometimes, it must be added, of errors too. But while many moralized there were few who could add to the student's discipline of patient research in the establishment of facts, the historian's insight into causes, his appraisement of values, his sense of a just perspective. Nor

[1] *Paradiso*, x. 130–31.

need we wonder that it should be so, whether we hold that the historian is born not made, or follow the depressing opinion propounded by Beatus Rhenanus to the Emperor Charles V that judgement is wont to be the very last addition to consummated learning.[1] Materials may be scanty or intractable or even, it may be suggested, unreliable. These are the problems of the historical student in all ages. "An historian," said Horace Walpole, in regard to the War of Independence of the American Colonies, "who shall consult the Gazettes of the times, will write as fabulous a romance as Gargantua."[2] But those of us who have listened lately with discreet admiration to the account of a Transatlantic seminar on Sinn Fein based apparently on the collation of accounts in journals and periodicals by students ignorant of Erse, if not of Ireland, may feel a kindlier sympathy for the men who wrote the earliest annals of our Church and nation without these advantages, and may estimate their achievements in the light of a juster appreciation of the opportunities they enjoyed and the difficulties that they tried to overcome.

The subject assigned to this lecture is the Monastic Chronicler, and even so few will be surprised if the temerity of the attempt is speedily safeguarded, though not removed, by restriction to a particular school. But if our story is to finish at St. Albans, at the end, as has been said, of the first day's journey from London on the Great North Road, we can scarcely

[1] *Op. Epp. Des. Erasmi*, ed. P. S. Allen (Oxon, 1906), i. 69.

[2] Sept. 17, 1778. *Letters of Horace Walpole*, ed. Toynbee (Oxford, 1904), x. 322.

avoid beginning many stages further along this or other roads which the St. Albans' monks knew well, whether in the scriptorium they traced the sources of history in Bede or Geoffrey of Monmouth, or in the ordinary business of a great monastery they pursued their journeys to estates as far afield as Durham and Northumberland, East Anglia or South Wales. It is at Wearmouth and Jarrow and in the eighth century that the scientific study of English history begins. Not that Bede had no predecessors. The sixth century historian, Gildas, "the wisest of the Britons," as Alcuin calls him, had related in his *De Excidio Britanniæ*, in accents of woe, (*flebili sermone*) the "inenarrabilium scelerum facta" of his time.[1] Ready to hand, too, were writers whose concern was not primarily with Britain, such as Orosius and Eutropius, and biographies of saints like Constantius' Life of the great Germanus of Auxerre whom as German and Garmon Britain, which he aided in the conflict with Pelagianism, honours no less than France. Ready too, maybe, was a primitive story of St. Alban—would that we knew its date, for it underwent developments later that would have astonished its author; or the account of the miracles of Ethelburga, the saintly abbess of Barking and sister of St. Erconwald, Bishop of the East Saxons, written by people who knew for the recollection and edification of those that came after,[2] or the record of the wanderings of St. Fursey,[3] one of the Apostles of East Anglia whom Britain

[1] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, i. 22, ed. C. Plummer (Oxon, 1896).
[2] *Ibid.*, iv. 7. [3] *Ibid.*, iii. 19.

shares with County Clare and Peronne, a record with a description of a vision of the unseen world, one of the earliest of many examples with which the student of mediæval chronicles is familiar, contained in a *libellus* from which, so Bede tells the reader, he may derive much profit for his soul. And if Bede does not, like William of Malmesbury, refer to the Life of St. Wilfrid by his own contemporary Eddius we may be sure that he had read it and everything else available ; nor shall we lightly accuse of unfair plagiarism in historical writing a man who entreats copyists of his theological works not to omit the notes of authorities cited—a request which they have at any rate very largely ignored. There is no work, unless it be Bishop Lightfoot's edition of the Apostolic Fathers, or Bishop Stubbs' Introduction to the volumes which he edited in the Rolls Series, to which one could so readily refer a student desirous of instruction in historical method as Mr. Plummer's great edition of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. In this he will not only find summarized a truly amazing list of the written sources with which Bede's voluminous works prove acquaintance, either at first or second hand, but also collected the references which shew how a monk whose life was spent in a monastery in the North of England could still gather such information as was available for Kent and Essex, Wessex and East Anglia. Bede's works, indeed, are a singular example of what may be accomplished by a man leading a life under rule. But the more one studies them (and the *Ecclesiastical History* represents, of course, but a very small proportion of

their bulk) the more astonished one becomes at the results which the economy of time between the due observance of the discipline of the rule and the daily care of chanting in the church could bring to a scholar and preacher whose delight, as he himself tells us, was always either to learn or to teach or to write.[1] "Dulce habui"—as Mr. Plummer points out, it is a favourite phrase—that is the spirit in which the student's best work is done. True, Bede had a great library within reach, enriched by the acquisitions of Benedict Biscop, Abbat Ceolfrid and others; and we can understand something of the scholar's zest as we see him correcting the book of the Life and Passion of St. Anastasius "badly translated out of Greek and worse emended by some unskilful hand," or rejoicing in the pious service of writing the lives of the abbats, or the "vita sublimis" of Cuthbert, at once monk and bishop, or collecting materials for the history in which he can himself add new details when he comes to write. But as one reads the pages of those great commentaries on scripture, or studies with painful labour the works as chronology of no small importance in their time, one can only marvel at an ardour little less than heroic in one who was at least at one time his own dictator, shorthand writer and copyist.[2]

We shall see something later, perhaps, of the bewildering results of the different chronological methods of

[1] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, v. 24.

[2] *Epistola ad Accam* (*Opera Bedæ* [Basle, 1563], v. 177), prefixed to the Commentary on St. Luke's Gospel.

historical writers in the Middle Ages; but Bede set a standard of some importance when in his History he introduced datings by the year of our Lord's Incarnation. If only these early writers generally had chosen a fixed beginning of that year and followed it with uniformity! In the composition of his History Bede's arrangement is not strictly chronological but determined with some regard to subjects, a method on which many perhaps think that he followed Eusebius, just as Sigebert of Gemblours later began (at least in intention) to follow Jerome. Bede himself had a continuator, but for some centuries no successor; and his real greatness as historian stands out in bold relief when the Ecclesiastical History is compared with what we know of most of the work of the centuries preceding the Conquest alike in respect of scale and of treatment.

The continuation of Bede is in the form strictly of Annals, and even though it does not rival the succinct brevity of a thirteenth-century Abingdon Chronicle preserved in one of the Cotton MSS.[1] in the British Museum, part of which is arranged in four columns headed in Latin, "Year," "Man," "Begat," "Lived," we could wish that valuable as it is it had told us more. Parallel with it and, as we may follow Bishop Stubbs in thinking, of great importance is the missing Ninth-century Chronicon which underlies the first part of

[1] Claudius C IX. Cf. the "Annals of Winton" in Vitellius A XVII of the same collection, which gives one line to a year and that often not filled (Sir T. D. Hardy, *Descriptive Catalogue of MSS. relating to the History of Great Britain and Ireland* (Rolls Series), ii, 453).

the *Historia Regum* of Symeon of Durham in the twelfth century. One work of a different kind may be mentioned in spite of the doubts that have been cast upon its authenticity—if we may still dare to use the word—and its date. We may not believe all that we are told in the "Life of Alfred" any more than in the pages of Mrs. Markham, even if we retain childhood's fondness for the stories of the Psalter and of the *Panes subcinericei;* but frankly the difficulties do not seem insuperable which stand in the way of believing that the work itself was written by Asser, monk and Bishop of Sherborne in the early years of the tenth century. And if the Bishop found the story of the cakes—we do not know that he did—in the Life of St. Neot, no power on earth would have prevented him using it to embellish his story. We are so unimaginative in our criticism of writers of a bygone day. The Muse of History, like all other Muses and Graces, is feminine, and even when entrusted to masculine hands does not disdain the use of those harmless artifices which set off and adorn the subject, even if they sometimes disguise it. My great predecessor Henry Wharton—*vir miræ eruditionis*—was accustomed in extracting works to omit the marvellous: he died at thirty-one, but alas! had long outgrown the era of the "iuventus mundi," and was probably under the curious but common delusion that the best judges of the Middle Ages are the middle-aged.

Last and greatest of all the Annals of the period is the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in its various forms, in itself presenting problems enough to furnish material

for many lectures and the theme of many spirited discussions. Of the seven chief MSS. of it that are known to us five are in the Cotton Collection, and their composition is assigned, as most students know, to five different monasteries—Winchester, Canterbury, Abingdon, Worcester, Peterborough—each yielding some special materials for its own district. The student who takes Mr. Plummer's *Two Saxon Chronicles*[1] as a guide will find himself embarked upon a fascinating voyage of discovery if he have eyes to see the course, and it may be worth while to remind ourselves that there must have been many more early versions of which we know nothing save at second-hand : at least that seems a legitimate inference from the character of the texts used, for example, by Florence of Worcester and Symeon of Durham. We may think the narrative somewhat jejune, especially in places where curiosity is stimulated without being satisfied ; but if by an effort of mental abstraction we could remove from our knowledge all that comes directly or indirectly either from the works of Bede or from the compilers of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, we should find that the pre-Conquest history of this country is, save for one century only, almost a blank, or at least deprived of all clue to the interpretation of the scattered fragments.

Of course, even with these aids there are enormous gaps and baffling obscurities. William of Malmesbury tells us that a story of the birth of Athelstan is derived from ballads (*cantilenæ*) worn away by the lapse of

[1] Two vols. (Oxford, 1892, 1899).

time rather than from books thought out for the instruction of posterity [1]; yet he is writing only two centuries later. And in regard to yet earlier times there may well have been many who were unfavourably impressed by the reflexion that Bede's is an *Historia Gentis Anglorum;* and as might be expected the invention, *ben trovato*, of the *Historia Britonum* or *Regum Britanniæ* supplied a long-felt want. If Bede the monk has been called the Father of English History, Geoffrey, possibly a monk, probably Archdeacon of Monmouth, possibly, though it has been denied, Bishop of St. Asaph in the twelfth century, had some claim to the title of Father of English Fiction, even if we do not go so far as some did in his own day and soon after and credit himself with no distant affiliation to the Father of Lies. There was one vast gap in a period of singular interest and importance, and he purported to supply it. "Neither by word of mouth or written record," says Henry of Huntingdon,[2] "had I been able to obtain any information of these times [from Brutus to Julius Cæsar] oft as I sought it. But this year (1139) on my way to Rome I found at Bec the records of the things aforesaid and was amazed." He might well be, for it is all there in the *Historia Britanniæ*. But some doubted if it were all true. Many of us will remember, and it is worthy of quotation as an example of the critical spirit in an age from

[1] *De Gestis Regum Anglorum*, ed. Stubbs (Rolls Series), Lib. II (vol. i, p. 155).

[2] Letter to Warinus Brito (printed in *Chronicle of Robert of Torigni*, ed. Hewlett (Rolls Series, 1889), i, 65; cf. Ward, *Catalogue of Romances*, i, 210 (British Museum, 1883).

which that spirit has been supposed to be absent, the terms of stern censure in which Geoffrey's performance is dealt with by a writer in the same century, William, a canon regular of the Augustinian Priory of Newburgh in Yorkshire. He speaks of Geoffrey "surnamed Arthur, for that the fables concerning Arthur drawn from the ancient figments of the Britons and augmented from his own store, by drawing over them the colour of the Latin tongue, he has cloaked with the honourable name of History." [1] And Alfred of Beverley writing earlier still when the *Historia Regum Britanniæ* has just appeared and is on the lips of everyone in the learned world of the day selects, he says, such portions as can be corroborated, for there are some that he finds it impossible to believe [2] —which is not surprising. The "prisca Britonum figmenta" were no doubt the stories in "Nennius," from whom probably Geoffrey borrowed his title, supplemented from the mysterious Celtic work which Walter, the Archdeacon of Oxford, who is sometimes called Calenius, was said to have brought from Brittany and which Geoffrey professed to translate.[3] It is no proof that he did not do so that some parts of the work are clearly not translations, but derived from Latin sources which can be identified. But what are we to think of the composition of the work as a whole? That Geoffrey should have accepted these

[1] Gulielmi Neubrigensis, *Historia Anglica*, Procœmium. The whole passage is very amusing.

[2] Alur. Beverlac. *Annales*, ed. Hearne (Oxonii, 1716), pp. 2, 3.

[3] *Hist. Regum Brit.*, i, 1 (ed. San-Marte, Halle, 1854): he calls Walter "in oratoria arte atque in exoticis historiis eruditus."

stories as history may seem to some an inordinate demand upon their credulity; and many no doubt prefer the theory that he was guilty of deliberate imposture. The solution is simple, but it is not therefore necessarily correct, and a truthful conclusion will not always follow from a major premiss which the Psalmist adopted in haste. All bishops, one would suppose, are clear-sighted, far-seeing men, at least to their archdeacons, since if the bishop be blind it is the archdeacon's fault. And may not a bishop who has been an archdeacon be allowed to be a hero to himself, thrilled with the joy of a new discovery? This may perhaps be called an effort to save his credit at the expense of his sense; but I have never been able to persuade myself either that the works on which the *Historia Britanniæ* purports to be based had no real existence or that Geoffrey is not honest, even if humorous, in his reference to the later work projected by Caradoc of Llancarvan.[1] However this may be, one remark must be added in conclusion. If it be true, as it probably is, that much that lies behind Bede has perished owing to the fact that he was supposed to have superseded it, the evil effect, on the other hand, of Geoffrey's work on the historical writing of many generations of monastic chroniclers of even less historical instinct can scarcely be over-estimated. And yet for us as for them, though in a different sense, the Arthurian legends and the Prophecies of Merlin, whether they took their source from the imagination of the shadowy "Nennius" or of a still more evasive

[1] *Hist. Regum Brit.*, xii, 20 (ed. Giles, London, 1844, p. 228).

writer in Brittany, or of Geoffrey himself, have a value which is independent of the question whether or not they have a substratum of fact as one is tempted—it may be merely Celtic credulity—to believe: Arthur is indeed worthy, as William of Malmesbury said,[1] to be the theme of truthful history. His name shines, in Dr. Bright's phrase, "through a golden mist of fable," but it shines.

The century which followed the Norman Conquest introduces a new era in the writing of English history. It takes a wider scope and its writers are drawn from a wider field. The career of Marianus Scotus "chronicorum scriptor veracissimus," [2] an Irishman but a monk of Cologne and a recluse at Fulda and Maintz, may serve as an illustration, and though his work as chronicler is now overshadowed by that of Florence of Worcester, his studies in chronology probably exercised a greater influence than we often realize. And with the wider field the common stock of historians of a later age received a corresponding enlargement. In relation to this common stock there are two considerations which it is really important to have always in mind. Both can best be illustrated by examples. First, an account like that of Hasting the Dane, shall we say, is in the main the same whether we read it in Roger of Wendover,[3] in the thirteenth century,

[1] *De Gestis Regum*, vol. i, 11 (Rolls Series): "dignus plane quem non fallaces somniarent fabulæ, sed veraces prædicarent historiæ."

[2] Rogeri de Wendover, *Chronica sive Flores Historiarum*, ed. H. O. Coxe (London: English Historical Society, 1841), i, 490, ad ann., 1052.

[3] *Ibid.*, ad ann., 887; Coxe, *op. cit.*, i, 349 ff.

or in Walsingham, *Ypodigma Neustriæ*,[1] in the fifteenth. The reason of course is that it is derived from a common source, in the case before us from the writings of William Calculus or Gemeticensis, the monk of Jumièges, that city " velut gemma in annulo " which gave also to Canterbury an Archbishop ; and William took it from Dudo the Norman, though he made it his own. The colour may be heightened, the compilation made with greater or less accuracy, but the substratum is the same. Secondly, it is necessary to examine carefully the way in which such extracts are made. When, for example, we read that Hengest was succeeded by Osric, known as Æsc, as ruler over the people of the Saxons in Kent, from whom the Kings of Kent are called " Æskynges " to *this day*,[2] the veriest tiro will realize that we are reading not Wendover nor Geoffrey of Monmouth from whom he borrowed it, but Bede from whom without acknowledgment the statement is probably taken ; in other words, it is a statement not of the thirteenth century nor of the twelfth, but of the eighth. This may seem so elementary in this instance as to be scarcely worth saying ; but it seems by no means so certain that it is equally borne in mind in the higher criticism of other historical records.

There are two other features to which we may venture to call attention. Historians, and especially monastic historians, are often accused of partisanship,

[1] Rolls Series, p. 6 ff.

[2] Wendover, ad ann., 489, Coxe, *op. cit.*, i, 43 ; cf. Bede, *Hist. Eccl.*, ii, 5.

and the accusation is no doubt often true. But the widening of outlook has, sometimes, at any rate, given a broader view; and Ordericus Vitalis, an Englishman, though a Norman monk, has reached already, at least in aspiration, the historian's attitude of philosophical detachment when he writes, "I shall relate the melancholy vicissitudes of English and Normans without flattery, seeking for the honour of no recompense from victors or from vanquished."[1] And the age of universal history has begun also. If the chronicles of Marianus Scotus began no earlier than Augustus, that must have seemed a paltry limitation to men who had learnt like Bede from the writings of the blessed Isidore, Bede's companion in Paradise, to think of Seven Ages of the world; and therefrom follow many strange deductions by the way. From William of Jumièges you may learn, as Wendover did and many another, that Japhet, the third son of Noah, had a son Magog, "from whom drawing their description from the last syllable of their father's name the *Gothic* race is called."[2] Such writers may not have been skilled in phonetics, but we should do them wrong if we suggest that the critical faculty was always dormant. William of Malmesbury relates the story of the discovery at Rome of the body of Pallas, the son of Evander, of whom Vergil speaks, and of the epitaph upon his tomb. But the verses are too much for him, and he adds, "Though Carmentis, Evander's

[1] Ord. Vit., *Hist.*, Part II. Lib. iii, 21; (Migne *Patr. Lat.* clxxxviii. c. 304).

[2] Gul. Gemet., *Hist.*, i. 3 (Migne, *Patr. Lat.* cxlix. c. 782); *cf.* Wendover, ad ann., 912; Coxe, *op. cit.*, i, 378.

mother, is said to have discovered Latin letters I don't believe the epitaph was made at that time"[1]; and the fact that he suggests as the author Ennius or some other poet need not destroy the credit of that flash of insight. Listen again to his description of a brother writer, David the Scot, afterwards Bishop of Bangor, who had written a history of the war of the Emperor Henry V with the Pope on the subject of Investitures, in which he was more prone to the favour of royalty than would become an historian (*historicum*)." "Indeed," Malmesbury continues, "he even commends" the Emperor's "unheard of violence in taking the Pope (*apostolicum*) captive, . . . alleging the example of Jacob who gripping the angel fast extorted a blessing. . . . That I may not seem by a word to press hardly on a good man I determine to make allowance for him, since he has not written a history but a panegyric."[2]

We need scarcely perhaps apologize for this diversion from our main subject, since after all it is strictly in the mediæval manner. But let us think of the list of historians of the early twelfth century, Englishmen living and writing in England though not in English (except Layamon, I do not remember anything that could be called properly a chronicle *in English* before the latter part of the thirteenth century.) Our list will include Florence, a monk of Worcester († 1118); Eadmer, a monk of Canterbury († 1124), the friend and biographer of St. Anselm; Symeon, precentor of Durham (fl. *c.* 1130); William of Malmesbury († 1143),

[1] *De Gestis Regum Angl.*, Lib. II (Rolls Series, vol. i, pp. 258–9).
[2] *Op. cit.*, Lib. V (Rolls Series, vol. ii, pp. 498–9).

and towards the end of the century we shall add Gervase, monk of Canterbury († *c.* 1210); William the Augustinian canon of Newburgh († 1198), and the writer of the "Vita et gesta Regum Henrici II et Ricardi I," which goes under the name of "Benedict of Peterborough." As in the case of the MSS. of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, it will be noticed that their histories therefore represent several parts of England, from each of which contemporary events could be viewed from a different angle, and in each of which there would be reasonable, in some cases considerable, facility of access to sources of information; and in each case the writer is a person who lives, or has lived, under religious rule. Of the historical authorities not subject to this disability or advantage, according to the point of view, there are of primary importance for the time Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingdon († 1155); Ralph de Diceto, Dean of St. Paul's († 1202); Roger of Hoveden († 1201), and the unknown author of the "Gesta Stephani." We need not concern ourselves in the least to set the one class against the other. No one without a polemical interest to serve would seek to do so. What may fairly be emphasized is the fact that while so far as we know only one of them is a layman, they are all engaged in writing contemporary history according to their lights with a desire for truthfulness of statement and without exclusively ecclesiastical prepossessions or preoccupations; and further, that each of them contributes something to our English story without the knowledge of which we should be greatly the poorer in understanding. And it will not always be

what you would expect. At least I do not know why the Peterborough Chronicler should be one to whom one would specially look for information on a point in the history of the "Curia Regis," or William of Newburgh for Henry II's judicial administration in general, or Gervase of Canterbury for the military organization of King John in 1205. And again, a twelfth-century chronicle like a sixteenth-century Bishop's Register, if one could only induce people to believe it, may be good evidence for a far earlier period: it will depend upon the authorities to which the writer had access and the use that he made of them. I have long been inclined to believe that there is early history preserved in Florence of Worcester of greater importance than has often been realized, and you will remember that Bishop Stubbs does not regard the fact that the succession of the Kings of Lindsey is only found in him as adequate reason for rejecting it.[1] But then Bishop Stubbs was so different from some of our moderns, few of whom would dare to write of the deposition of Beornred, King of Mercia in 758, as told in the *Lives of the Two Offas*, attributed to Matthew Paris, that it "is scarcely historical, but may be quite true."[2] And it would seem as foolish to reject as worthless Eadmer's *Life of St. Dunstan* on the ground that it represents the devil as speaking French as Carlyle's *Frederick the Great* because of its characteristic reflexions upon "the pot-bellied equanimity of the Anglo-Saxons." Some at least of these men were capable of writing history upon the

[1] *Constitutional History*, 6th edit. (Oxford, 1903), i, 189.
[2] *Ibid.*, i, 155.

grand scale. Within a limited field the account of the days of Lanfranc and of Anselm in Eadmer's *Historia Novorum* is of extraordinary interest. And William of Malmesbury, the first really great successor of Bede, knows like him that there is a great and wonderful story to tell; passion-stained it may be and marred by the infirmities of men, yet full of deeds worthy note of men whose memory is perishing and in many cases has already perished for lack of chronicler. He writes the history in many various ways, the enumeration of which will illustrate what we shall see in regard to a later school. He gives us side by side a *Gesta Regum* and a *Gesta Pontificum*, and in both so far as he may he takes not his monastery but England for his province. Time passes and he revises his work without destroying the old, and, besides, an *Historia Novella* enables him to carry on the tale to a later date. In the last book of the *Gesta Pontificum* he has told the story of Aldhelm: now he sets to work upon a Life of Dunstan, not without reflexion upon the way in which Osbern, a monk of Canterbury, has essayed the task before; and coming nearer to his own time the great St. Wulstan of Worcester affords another fitting subject for biography. Or, again, he is living at Glastonbury: the Abbat, Henry of Blois, soon to be more famous still as Bishop of Winchester, is his friend; and what more natural than that he should be asked to recount the glories of that illustrious house. He cannot quite believe all that he is told, but he makes the best of it by telling what the story is.[1] After all, if one is at Glastonbury one does

[1] Since this lecture was written Dr. Armitage Robinson, Dean of Wells, in *Somerset Historical Essays*, I: "William of Malmesbury

not dispute concerning Joseph of Arimathæa any more than at University College in Oxford one casts doubts upon its foundation by King Alfred the Great, a fact which is sufficiently attested by tradition and fortified by a judgement of the Court of King's Bench in the eighteenth century and therefore, no doubt, has a sanctity for all lawyers greater even than that which they are wont to attribute to the infallible historical dicta of the Lord Coke. Some of us learnt long ago from M. Jusserand's *Literary History of the English People*[1] to delight in similar stories ; but they are even better in the pages of William of Malmesbury himself. Seven hundred years before Prosper Merimée he tells the tale of the ring entrusted to the statue, which many like Wendover loved to copy. William of Malmesbury, says M. Jusserand, " does something to keep awake the reader's attention, and notes down, with this view many anecdotes, some of which are excellent prose tales. . . . He does not reach the supreme heights of art, but he walks in the right way ; he does not know how to blend his hues, as others have done since, so as to delight the eye with many-coloured sights ; but he already paints in colours. To please his readers he suddenly and naïvely says, ' Now I will tell you a story. Once upon a time . . .' "[2]

Does all this seem to some one of us solemn trifling,

' on the Antiquity of Glastonbury ' " (Milford, 1921) has subjected the story with equal learning and humour to a fresh examination. The result is certainly not discreditable to William of Malmesbury, and the book is one from which the student may learn much of method as well as of Somersetshire history.

[1] Fisher Unwin, 1895. 2nd edit., 1907.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 199.

unworthy of the dignity of the subject ? We will make him our apologies, with a secret doubt whether he will ever begin to understand the Middle Ages : none of us would claim to have made more than a beginning. And William of Malmesbury remains a great historian, even if he does allow himself and us sometimes a little diversion. And let our depressing censor take consolation. If he will look in the placid and unromantic pages of Gross' *Sources*,[1] to which we all of us owe grateful acknowledgments, under the heading of William of Newburgh, an historian more after his own heart, he will find himself referred to an article by Freeman in the *Contemporary Review* for 1878, in which amid much else that is worth reading he will be told that William of Newburgh is " the Father of Historical Criticism." One instance of it we have noticed in his treatment of the *Historia Britanniæ*. He can see with sufficient detachment the strife of parties under Stephen and its gradual subsidence ; he can applaud with real insight and sincerity the administration of Henry II, and treat with equal candour and justice the genuine grievances entailed by the taxation system of Hubert de Burgh in the reign of Richard I, and the character of William Fitz Osbert who headed the revolt which ensued. It is no small merit, for let us remember that there are few characters to which it is harder even now for the academic historian to do justice than that of the popular leader, especially if he be of a different and romantic race.

[1] *Sources and Literature of English History . . . to about* 1485, by Charles Gross. 2nd edit. (Longmans, 1915).

I have spoken of a few men of primary importance. There are others like Richard the Prior of Hexham in the middle of the century, and Richard of Devizes a monk of Winchester as it draws to its close, both of some general value, and one, Gosselin, monk of St. Augustine's at Canterbury, who after the lapse of more than eight hundred years has suddenly become to many students of archæology a source of thrilling interest. There are hundreds more of lesser note and all catalogued by Sir Thomas Hardy, writers of whom at most a score or two perhaps are known to some of us in manuscripts—I confess that I never think of Henry Wharton without marvelling at what he found time to read. One other work may be mentioned in passing, though I can only do so as yet at second hand: it is in a Bodleian MS. 672 (3005), "Lucianus de Laudibus Cestriæ," said to be the composition of a monk of Chester and "the earliest attempt in England at writing the history of a town." Lest our hopes should be raised unduly, Sir Thomas Hardy is careful to add that "there is, however, but little in reality about the city of Chester."[1]

To one class of monastic chronicles, however, some reference must be made before we pass to the second part of our subject, both on account of its intrinsic importance and also because it continued to grow after the writing of general history had fallen into decline. I mean the chronicles which are primarily and specifically concerned with the fortunes of a particular

[1] Hardy, *Descriptive Catalogue*, ii, 90. Edited for the Lancashire and Cheshire Record Society by Miss M. V. Taylor (1912).

monastic house. Some of them, like the Chronicle of Battle Abbey, or the Annals of Burton, of Waverley, of Dunstable, of Melrose, of Evesham, of Tewkesbury—you will no doubt supplement the list—are of real importance for general history : others are almost entirely concerned with local incidents. In that case the history is viewed from the standpoint of the interests of the particular house, and the not always very edifying, though sometimes amusing disputes with the local magnate, secular or ecclesiastical, or with suits in the Curia Romana, frequently described with no little plainness of speech. Some, like the Chronicle of Margam, may seem painfully jejune, though not for that reason to be rejected as valueless ; others may be almost as full of detail as a general history, albeit of a different kind. In almost all we can speedily determine the point at which the writer, very often indeed unknown to fame, begins to speak of matters directly within his own knowledge. We shall lose much if we imagine that being local in interest they can be neglected without loss to the historical student. There is something at least in what the poet Gray said : "That any man living may make a book worth reading, if he will but set down with truth what he has seen or heard, no matter whether the book is well written or not."[1]

[1] Quoted by Horace Walpole, *Letters*, ed. Toynbee (Oxford, 1904), x, 411–12.

## II

HITHERTO we have been considering, however inadequately, the monastic chronicles in general. What I shall try to say in this second section will be confined to a particular school of historical writers associated with a particular monastic house—the abbey of St. Alban, "proto-martyr of the English." So men loved to call him in later days, though the most certain fact about him is that at any rate he was not an Angle. The story of the foundation of a monastic house in his honour by King Offa in the eighth century seems despite difficulties in the evidence by which it is supported, less difficult to accept than to reject; and in view of the facts disclosed by a collation of the Papal documents,[1] most of them of indisputable genuineness, preserved in Matthew Paris' *Chronica Majora* with the list of those actually still remaining in the registers of Popes Innocent IV and Alexander IV, I am quite unable to regard as of any real weight the argument[2] that has been founded upon the silence of the Papal Registers as to Offa's relations with Adrian I or the absence from them of early references to St. Albans.

The era of the Conquest marks a new beginning in the history of the Abbey. Paul of Caen, the 14th

[1] *Chronica Majora* (Rolls Series), ed. Luard, v, pp. xviii ff.

[2] L. F. Rushbrook Williams, *History of the Abbey of St. Alban* (Longmans, 1917), p. 14.

Abbat, kinsman and as some said, according to the Chronicler,[1] the son of Lanfranc, subjected it to strenuous reform not unaccompanied with reflexions on the character of his Saxon predecessors as boorish and stupid men (*rudes et idiotas*). The Archbishop gave to it new ordinances still in the thirteenth century preserved in that *libellus* which Lanfranc wrote and Anselm read and approved,[2] while more than a century later still there is preserved in the "Book of Benefactors" a record of his liberality, whether the final bequest be a hundred pounds or a hundred books of which fifty then remained.[3] To me the statement of the modern historian of the Abbey that "not until the end of the fourteenth century, when episcopal interference was no longer dreaded, were the St. Albans people willing to acknowledge the debt they owed to the Norman Archbishop" seems quite unwarranted.[4] But Abbat Paul did more than make the church of St. Alban a school of religion and of observance of rule (*disciplinaris observantiæ*) throughout the whole realm of England. He was, we are told, "eleganter litteratus"—"elegant" is the favourite epithet of the thirteenth century in polite society and even occurs in a prayer of St. Thomas Aquinas—and besides giving many notable books he built a scriptorium, which was endowed by the generosity of a friendly knight, and installed in it choice scribes brought from far (*electi et procul quæsiti*) who wrote

[1] *Gesta Abbatum* (Rolls Series), i, 51–2. [2] *Ibid.*, i, 61.
[3] Printed in Trokelowe, *Chronica* (Rolls Series), p. 441.
[4] Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

fine, nay choice, books (*libros præelectos*), Lanfranc providing the originals to copy (*exemplaria ministrante*).[1] Thus with probably Norman scribes an indubitably Norman abbat prepared, not in a cloister, but in a separate building, for what was later to be the most famous of all English historical schools. In his time, too, the abbey received accessions of property which enabled it to transplant monks to Wallingford and Hertford, to Belvoir in Leicestershire and Binham in Norfolk, and, most important of all for our purpose, to Tynemouth. Here a cell was given to the abbey by Robert de Mowbray, the famous Earl of Northumberland, who had already shewn his dislike for the monks of Durham who claimed it and failing to obtain it saw in the death of the Abbat of St. Albans a fitting retribution.[2]

After the death of Abbat Paul in 1093 St. Albans continued to receive accessions of books, but we hear of very few being produced there. His successor, Abbat Richard, gave for the maintenance of the "domus scriptoris" two parts of the tithes of almost all the privileged churches pertaining to St. Albans,[3] a grant which was exchanged by Geoffrey, the 16th Abbat, for three daily allowances from the almoner, lest the scriptores should be hindered by the buying of food.[4] In opposition to what seems the received opinion I am bound to say that the inference which I draw is that in Abbat Geoffrey's time (1119–46) the number of scriptores was three and that they were not

[1] *Gesta Abb.*, i, 57–8.
[2] Symeon of Durham, *Hist. Eccl. Dunelm.*, iv, 4.
[3] *Gesta Abb.*, i, 76. [4] *Ibid.*

monks, although the abbat himself seems to have been a scribe of very considerable merit. But he had not received his training in the abbey, having been indeed a schoolmaster at Dunstable [1] where he produced the famous miracle play of St. Katharine with borrowed copes, offering himself as a monk in exchange for them when they were accidentally burnt. During his abbacy he set over the "antiquarii," as they were called, a man who became his own successor, Ralph Gubiun, "amator librorum et adquisitor sedulus." Robert the 18th Abbat had a reputation for considerable learning and earned the title of "Reformer of the Liberties of the Church of St. Alban." Of special note among the monks of his time is Dom Adam the Cellarer, a man circumspect and discreet in temporal matters *sed illiteratus*.[2] What standard the Cellarer fell below we do not know, but at least there was one who fell lower; for when a certain father, "honeste vivens in sæculo, litteratus aliquantulum," became a monk of St. Albans and desired the same privilege of admission for his son, the young man after examination was found insufficient and refused.[3] He was Nicholas "Brekespere," who lived to become Pope Adrian IV and bore no malice. Of Abbat Robert himself it is recorded that he caused a large number of books to be written which it would take long, says the biographer, to specify,[4] so that we may assume that the scriptorium continued to be used. But of historical or quasi-historical works even remotely

[1] *Gesta Abb.*, i, 73.
[2] *Ibid.*, i, 121.
[3] *Ibid.*, i, 112, 124–5.
[4] *Ibid.*, i, 179.

connected with St. Albans the *Gesta Abbatum* have up to this point given us mention of but two—the first an "Historia de sancto Albano cum Legenda" in the time of Abbat Geoffrey,[1] and the second in Abbat Robert's day, a Life of Edward the Confessor, which Laurence, formerly a monk of St. Albans, compiled on becoming Abbat of Westminster, from various ancient treatises and caused to be elegantly written at the request of King Henry II.[2] At Robert's death, after sixteen years, in 1166, the Abbey, which had been free of debt at his accession, was heavily encumbered —it owed much to Christians but more to the Jews.[3] And sore is the grief of the later historian, Matthew Paris, that when in the course of the construction of the new Chapter House he caused the bodies of the former abbats to be buried with little ceremony (*nimis abjecte*), it was without the knowledge of discreet men and following the advice of his builder (*cæmentarius*). For alas! the builder had a stroke of apoplexy, and the memory of the place where each was laid perished. Robert's successor, Abbat Simon, found the scriptorium "fere dissipatum et contemptum"[4] and repaired it. This may seem at variance with what has been said about Abbat Robert, but I suspect that he let it fall into decay because he thought of building another, and neither time nor money lasted. Indeed, the career of Abbat Simon himself, even apart from the evidence mentioned above, sufficiently shews that Robert had not let the custom of transcribing books

[1] *Gesta Abb.*, i, 92.
[2] *Ibid.*, i, 159.
[3] *Ibid.*, i, 183.
[4] *Ibid.*, i, 192.

at any rate fall into disuse. For Simon's biographer tells us [1] that "he was by birth an Englishman and reared from his earliest years in the cloister and in the rigorous observance of the rule." After becoming abbat he "did not cease to write," *i.e.* transcribe, "excellent books and volumes, authentic and glossed, as well of the Old as of the New Testament—more noble ones we have never seen—and to prepare them with meticulous care. . . . If anyone wants to see these books he will find them in the painted aumbry in the church over against the tomb of St. Roger the Hermit." And as Mr. Rushbrook Williams points out,[2] if the modern student wants to see the abbat himself looking at the books he has made he will find the picture in the Cotton MS., Claudius E IV. Now it is at least reasonable to suppose from what has been said that Abbat Simon learnt his skill in the monastery itself. He repaired the scriptorium, as we have seen, but also—whether while the work was proceeding or not we do not know—maintained with becoming distinction in his own chamber (*camera*) two or three very choice writers (*electissimos scriptores*) with the result of a priceless store of excellent books.[3] He endeavoured, we are told elsewhere,[4] to attract honourable and educated men to the monastic life: in the scriptorium he introduced certain laudable regulations. As to what else he did there is a curious problem. "He ordained," says Sir Thomas Hardy, "that for the future every abbot should keep and support one

[1] *Gesta Abb.*, i, 184.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 80.
[3] *Gesta Abb.*, i, 192.
[4] *Ibid.*, i, 184.

sufficient scribe."[1] Mr. Williams improves upon this[2] and says: "He enlarged its revenues, and ordained that in future every Abbot should maintain at his own expense one 'special' writer, in addition to the ordinary inmates of the scriptorium." Yet what the writer of the *Gesta Abbatum* has written[3] means, and one may venture with confidence to assert can only mean, "he enriched it with revenues on the terms that in all subsequent times the abbat for the time being is to have one writer set apart for himself"—a stipulation which is reasonable enough and entirely consonant with monastic custom in regard to the allocation of revenues.

Abbat Simon, says Sir Thomas Hardy,[4] "undoubtedly created the office of Historiographer at St. Alban's." The evidence for this statement is not forthcoming, and since, so far as we can see, Abbat Simon's interests were entirely scriptural and liturgical it is at least unlikely. One incident towards the close of his time admittedly gave an opportunity for the historical imagination—the "Invention of St. Amphibalus." Readers of Bede will remember that the name of the clerk whom the pagan Alban went to seize and who converted him is not given.[5] At a later time, so it is usually suggested, the reference to his cloak—habitus, caracalla, amphibalon—occurring in Gildas, or one of the versions of the Acts of St. Alban, suffered

[1] *Descriptive Catalogue*, III, xxxiv. [2] *History*, p. 79.

[3] i, 192: "Et ipsum ampliavit redditibus, ita ut omnibus sequentibus temporibus debeat Abbas, qui pro tempore fuerit, unum habere scriptorem specialem."

[4] *Op. cit.*, III, xxxiv; *cf.* pp. 320, liii. [5] Bede, *H.E.*, i, 7.

a curious misinterpretation by Nennius or Geoffrey of Monmouth, and the clerk himself was given the name of Amphibalus. But however incredible some of the later stories about him may be, at least unless the whole Albanus story is mythical that anonymous clerk is a real person though anonymous, like the St. Architriclinus—the ruler of the marriage feast—of Cana of Galilee. It is easy to be too ready with accusations of conscious and deliberate fraud; and the imaginative faculty has been known to produce strange results even in critical writers. But I, at any rate, do not believe the Danish and Spanish stories of St. Alban's bones to be without a scintilla of truth, though it may be a very small one and somewhat different from what we would expect. At least it seems clear that there was a St. Alban legend current in written form at St. Albans before the *Historia Britanniæ*,[1] about the middle of the twelfth century, provided in an uncritical age an opportunity of adding to it; and though the possibility of fraud cannot be excluded, strange hallucinations happen still in visions when people's minds have been excited by stories they have heard. Whether or not the addition was made by William of St. Albans,[2] whoever he may have been, there seems to me no sufficient materials for forming a judgement. *Vires adquirit eundo*, but this is true also of the historiographer. By the time Sir Thomas Hardy has reached page 320 of the third volume of his *Catalogue of Materials* the "one sufficient scribe" of the Introduction has become: "He [*i.e.* Abbat Simon] established

[1] Galfridus Mon., *Hist. Brit.*, v. 5. [2] Hardy, *op. cit.*, ii, 394.

perpetually one chief scribe in the 'Scriptorium.' This officer was undoubtedly the 'Historiographer.'" And having created the office Sir Thomas Hardy proceeds to fill it with the person of a certain Walter, who is said by John Pits, in a work[1] published in 1619 but written a few years earlier, to have written "quaedam Anglicarum rerum chronica," and by Tanner to have been librarian and precentor of St. Albans. He is placed about the year 1180, and it is suggested[2] that this Walter of St. Albans is the author of the compilation known as the *Flores Historiarum*, extending in its original from the beginning of the world to the year 1154. Now in a section concerning "the foundation and merits of the monastery of St. Alban," added, perhaps by Thomas Walsingham, to the Cotton MS., Claudius, E IV (fol. 232), there is a reference to a chronicle brought down to the times of King Henry II whose reign began in that year. It has been suggested[3] that for Henry II we should read Henry III, since the work referred to is that of Roger of Wendover, which really continues at least as far as the end of 1234. We shall not, if we are wise, cut knots in this way, and Sir Thomas Hardy,[4] while declining to accept Mr. Coxe's suggestion of Henry III would have us substitute for "down to the times of Henry II," the year 1188, because it is at that point that the Corpus MS. XXVI of the *Flores Historiarum* ends, and

[1] *De Illustribus Angliæ Scriptoribus*, p. 845, Tanner, *Bibl.*, p. 352; *cf.* Matthew Paris, *Hist. Angl.*, ed. Madden (Rolls Series), I, xii–xiii.

[2] Hardy, *op. cit.*, II, 417. Contrast Roger of Wendover, *Flores Hist.*, ed. Hewlett (Rolls Series), III, xii ff.

[3] Coxe, *op. cit.*, I, xxix–xxx. [4] *Op. cit.*, III, xliii, xlv.

it contains a note that with the year 1189 begins "the true continuation of the history of Matthew Paris in another volume," which is of course the Corpus MS. XVI. The statement seems to me to be no more than a fourteenth-century indication to the student to look for another volume "in the same handwriting," though it is not as a fact also called *Flores Historiarum*, and he will there find beginning from 1189 the true continuation of Matthew Paris' history, not as it is usually interpreted the true continuation of Wendover's history by Matthew Paris—which would not be true.

It may seem gratuitous folly, but it is at least not impertinent, to add yet one more to the theories that has been held about this original historical or quasi-historical compilation at St. Albans, which is so important as the substratum of at least two far greater works. The theory may be right or wrong—it must be judged by its relation to the facts to be explained. I am inclined then to believe that there was existing in the fourteenth century in the St. Albans collection of books a volume called *Flores Historiarum* which ended in the year 1154 —brought down, that is, to the times of Henry II. There was also another volume which still exists called also *Flores Historiarum* and ending in the year 1188, the last year of Henry II's reign. If they were similar there were also not unimportant differences; and one fourteenth-century writer[1] assigns the first—quite rightly so far as he went—to Roger of Wendover; another assigns the second quite rightly to Matthew

[1] Printed in Io. Amundesham, *Annales Monasterii Sci Albani*, Appendix E (Rolls Series), ii, 303.

Paris. It is with the composition of the former volume that we are concerned. It contained two books with a prologue to each. The prologue to the first book (which came down to the Birth of our Lord) exists in two forms, one of them doubled in length by prefixing to it passages borrowed from Robert de Monte.[1] The earliest form of the first book was a bald and somewhat jejune record compiled mainly from Scripture supplemented by the researches of Ado, Archbishop of Vienne, and quotations from esteemed historical writers, such as Eusebius, Jerome, Orosius, Pompeius Trogus and the like. A comparison of the different MSS. of Wendover, Paris and " Matthew of Westminster " with these considerations in view will enable a good deal of this first book to be restored. The second book was concerned with the time since the Birth of our Lord. It was altered by addition and substitution more than once, notably, we may suppose, when the *Historia Britanniæ* of Geoffrey of Monmouth was being eagerly read for the light it threw *inter alia* upon St. Alban and his times while the Translation of St. Amphibalus was exciting the district and enriching the monastery and producing a new History of St. Alban cum Legenda or the "Acts of St. Alban and St. Amphibalus," by William of St. Albans, which has been placed among " the most tiresome and clumsy of monastic forgeries."[2]

But we are concerned with sober history. Is there any evidence for regular historical composition at St.

[1] Robert of Torigni, abbat of Mont St. Michel (de Monte S. Michaelis in Periculo Maris). [2] Williams, *History*, p. 77.

Albans, other than what we have mentioned prior to the time of the unknown Walter or of Roger of Wendover? A candidate for honours in history is ready to hand in the attractive person of Adam the Cellarer, famous during the time of Robert, the 18th Abbat (1151-66). It need not trouble us that no work of his remains—have we not apparently lost also the ode of Robert, a thirteenth-century canon of Salisbury, "in commendation of beer," and many other things that the mediæval world could not willingly let die? It is unfortunate that the record of his virtues describes him as illiterate,[1] but we will mask the inconvenient fact and march forward. "St. Albans," we read, "had long been the home of learning; it was now to become a centre of literary composition. The famous financier Adam employed his leisure in drawing up a Rotulus of occurrences during his lifetime,"[2] upon which we remark in passing that however true it may be that "the principal business man of a great house like St. Albans cannot have been illiterate, in the stricter sense of the word, in the twelfth century," it is quite another matter to credit him with powers of literary composition. But there is no doubt about it: "During the time of Simon, the tradition of historical writing initiated by Adam the Cellarer was not suffered to die out."[3] We turn back from Mr. Williams to Sir Thomas Hardy,[4] and we read, "The early portion of the work (he is speaking of the *Vitæ XXIII Abbatum*) is undoubtedly derived from the ancient roll written by

[1] *Gesta Abbatum*, i, 121.
[2] Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 77.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 80.
[4] Hardy, *op. cit.*, iii, p. 142.

Adam the Cellarar (if not compiled by him), and then belonging to Bartholomew the Clerk." And here we have the origin of the whole thing. In the margin of the Cotton MS., Nero D I, of the *Gesta Abbatum*, before the preface of that work, is a note, "According to an ancient roll of Bartholomew the Clerk who had been a long time with Dom Adam the Cellarer as his servant and retained the roll itself for himself (*sibi*), choosing this only ' de scriptis *suis* '—from *his own* writings," in other words, Bartholomew had been the Cellarer's clerk, and of all the things he had written for him he kept this one roll as a memento. Really mediæval Latin cannot be made to mean anything that happens to be convenient. And as a matter of principle it should not be construed ungrammatically where a grammatical construction is possible. In the present case it answers exactly to the facts. Adam the Cellarer, as we have seen, was specially famous for his business abilities: his adequate performance of the part of Martha[1] alike at Croyland and at St. Albans, is the subject of special encomium. The Abbey owed much to his administration, so much that under Abbat Warin he was granted an Anniversary[2] of the same observance as one of the Abbats among whom he had already received the honour of burial in a grave of which the stone as we know was repaired at the end of the fourteenth century, two hundred years after his death. By that time, and probably long before, regular *Gesta Cellerariorum* had come to be kept, for which possibly he had afforded a beginning. His skill *in rebus agendis*,

[1] *Gesta Abb.*, i, 121. [2] *Ibid.*, i, 206.

his *efficax diligentia*, especially in matters relating to the kitchen—the good monks are human—earned him a special memorial, and we find him active also on behalf of the Abbey in regard to claims to property.[1] If we look then at the opening of the Preface to which reference has been made it will not surprise us to find that it begins: "Here are noted the names of the Abbats of the Church of St. Alban; of whom very many acquired many benefits in possessions, dignities, sacred vessels and ornaments by their own labour and some also constructed buildings," etc. I do not myself doubt that this list with the possessions, etc.—so like other examples—was what was contained in the original roll made by Bartholomew the Clerk for Adam the Cellarer, "illiteratus" perhaps, but probably no more so than many men of action who have no time for polite letters. I have no doubt that it is one of the authorities on which Matthew Paris based his *Vitæ Abbatum*, and I believe that the careful reader can sometimes see just where it is being used. But that this roll was one of the bases of the St. Albans chronicles or *Flores* or anything else, or that it had any higher literary qualities than any other business roll, there does not seem the smallest ground for supposing.

We are left with a gap from 1154-89 at any rate. Can we do anything to supply it before the time of Wendover? I think we can. Sir Thomas Hardy, as has been noted, on the strength of the seventeenth-century statement of Pits and the eighteenth-century amplification of Tanner, has no hesitation in providing

[1] *Gesta Abb.*, i, 134.

an historiographer in the person of Walter of St. Albans. "With no evidence to the contrary," he says,[1] it is a method of argument that would solve many difficulties —"I take it for granted that the monk Walter compiled a chronicle, which ended at the death of King Stephen in 1154," and he adds, "he may have continued his compilation to his own time and ended it in 1188." One would hesitate to accept without other evidence the statement of Pits, and the addition that has been made to it may be only a very natural conjecture; but the man who made that addition, Thomas Tanner, sometime Archdeacon of Norfolk and later Bishop of St. Asaph, and the author of the *Notitia Monastica*, is not a man whose authority can be lightly rejected. He was an omnivorous collector of MSS.: the late Dean of Norwich, Dr. Beeching, used to say that he himself never visited the Bodleian without feeling inclined to shed tears at the evidence of Tanner's depredations; he certainly answered to the description applied by his friend Edmund Gibson to Obadiah Walker—I do not know if Gibson spoke from experience as Lambeth Librarian—"the old gentleman has too much of the spirit of an antiquary and a great scholar to think stealing a MS. any sin," and Tanner had certainly seen many things that have now perished. It will be unwise then to deny to Walter of St. Albans this shadowy possibility of existence and of authorship.

But there is a piece of evidence pointing to a different quarter which has been much discussed and which

[1] *Op. cit.*, III, p. xxxvi; *cf.* p. 320.

seems to deserve still further consideration. In the margin of the Douce MS. 207 of the *Flores Historiarum* is written by a later hand, "Thus far in the book of the chronicles of John the abbat."[1] The date is 1188, which is the one that we require; and the John cannot be "Johannes Hagulstadensis," John of Hexham, whose chronicle ends in 1154 and who was besides not an abbot but an Augustinian prior; nor can I remember any chronicler, English or foreign, of that time of sufficient note to be referred to *simpliciter* as "Johannes Abbas" in the same way as in one of the early Fathers a reference to "the Apostle" will almost, but not quite invariably, mean St. Paul (to one thirteenth-century Archdeacon of St. Albans it means Ecclesiastes). And again, though it is true, as has been contended, that chroniclers have a fondness for recording the death of their predecessors in the field of history, or at least the ending of their labours, and the notice by no means implies that the chronicler referred to is responsible for all that has gone before in the book in which the reference occurs, I do not think that it is too much to say that such a reference will be found to imply in nearly all cases both that the writer's work was before the chronicler or the authority he is copying or within reach, and that that work will be found to be one to which at some point or other he is under obligation. No such person, so far as one can judge, is forthcoming; and it does not therefore seem to me rash—I am anxious not to overstate the case—to hold that

[1] Coxe, *op. cit.*, ii, 435. In vol. i, p. xxxii, Mr. Coxe suggests John of Hexham as possible.

"Johannes Abbas" in this connexion means one of the Abbats of St. Albans. Now the only one who is the least likely is Warin's successor, John the 21st Abbat (1195-1214). Magister Johannes de Cella had been a student at Paris in his youth and is described in the *Gesta*[1] as capable accordingly in manhood of being regarded as "in grammar a Priscian, in metre an Ovid, in physic a Galen." It must be confessed that both his poetry and his physic receive in the course of the story some rather gruesome illustrations. In his government of the monastery it is recorded that he chose for preference "the best part, that of Mary, postponing the solicitude of Martha," which was left to the charge of Prior Reymund and to Roger the Cellarer. The monks reflected with pride that he could say the whole of the Psalter backwards, beginning with the last verse even unto the first, with regret that his building operations were exceedingly costly and that the buildings tumbled down. The Prior and the Cellarer, however, exerted themselves in the beautification of the church; and by the industry and lawful acquisition of Reymund there were written, we are told, and given to this church noble and exceedingly useful books,[2] and especially an "Historia Scholastica cum Allegoriis." This is of course the well-known work of Petrus Comestor, and the copy in question "liber elegantissimus" is usually supposed to be the Royal MS. 4 D VII now in the British Museum and so interesting as containing among other things Grosseteste's translation of the "Testaments of the Twelve

[1] i, 217. [2] *Gesta Abb.*, i, 232–4.

Patriarchs." This last was regarded as a treasure by Matthew Paris in a day when translations from Greek were by no means common. But the "Historia Scholastica" naturally exercised an influence earlier still, as will appear in the sequel.

We have supposed, for reasons which have at least verisimilitude, a volume of *Flores Historianum* ending in the year 1154. Now John de Cella, before becoming Abbat of St. Albans had been Prior of Wallingford, and, curiously enough, it is with a scene at Wallingford —the signing of the treaty between Stephen and Henry—and a brief note of Stephen's death that what we have supposed to be the second book of the compilation would end. But there is a still more curious fact: the statement that the Treaty was at Wallingford is a St. Albans interpolation [1] into the narrative of Ralph de Diceto or Robert de Monte. Among the witnesses to that Treaty was Geoffrey of Monmouth, and if Geoffrey of Monmouth was like Giraldus Cambrensis in literary vanity, the *Historia Regum Britanniæ* would not be likely to be allowed to remain unknown if it were not already held in honour in the Priory of Wallingford. Upon this, however, we can lay no stress, since it is purely matter for conjecture. But it is becoming less temerarious than it might at first appear to assume a continuation of the Chronicle from 1154 to 1188 where the scribe notes "Hucusque in libro cronicorum Johannis abbatis," and to assign this continuation to Abbat John, sometime Prior of Wallingford. It ends on a note of sadness. There is an abortive conference

[1] *Cf.* Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, ed. Luard, ii, 191; vii, p. x.

for the peace of Normandy between Philip of France, Richard Count of Poitou, and Richard's father, Henry II ; but the devil sowed tares in the middle of the wheat and they separated unreconciled. But why Abbat John should have ended at a point twenty-six years before his own death in 1214 and six or seven years before he himself became abbat we have no means of knowing with certainty. The work can hardly have been undertaken at all before he became abbat in 1195. If he had any share, however, in the revision of the earlier portion it must be remembered that that would represent, even with assistance, a considerable undertaking for a middle-aged man, even though he has "chosen the better part." And that there was more than one such revision there cannot be in the mind of any one familiar with the MSS. a shadow of doubt, though there may be, and has been, grave dispute as to the date or dates. The revision necessitated by the desire to incorporate material from the *Historia Britanniæ* cannot be earlier than the summer of 1147, which is the date of Geoffrey of Monmouth's work ; what we do not know is whether these additions were made at a different time from those derived from the book of Petrus Comestor which affect the compilation almost from the outset. Can we find a clue ?

There were two monks of St. Albans in the time of Abbat John who were destined to raise its fame as a school of historical writing higher than that perhaps of any other in England—Roger of Wendover and his junior contemporary, Matthew Paris. It is through their works that we shall hope to carry the story further.

## III

Of the early history of Roger of Wendover, who is said by later tradition to have been precentor of St. Albans before becoming Prior of Belvoir, the one certain fact is that he was removed from his office of Prior on the ground of incompetence by William of Trumpington, who became Abbat of St. Albans on the death of John de Cella in 1214. The same authority already referred to which tells us that Wendover brought his chronicles down to the time of Henry II,[1] tells us also that "to him the chronographers of almost the whole realm owe whatever they have; for he digested his chronicles plainly and pellucidly from the beginning of the world by distinctions of years down to" the time stated. In other words, he is credited with a very considerable work arranged in succession of years from the beginning of things to 1154, and this is the work assigned to him in the fourteenth century and called *Flores Historianum*. This we may call the first section. We have seen some reasons to suppose the existence of a second section due to Abbat John and extending from 1154-88. And there is also a third, and the most important section, in which he is certainly an original authority as well as a compiler—from 1189 to at least 1234. It will be necessary to deal with the three sections

[1] Printed in Amundesham, *Annales*, App. E., ii, 303.

separately, and it is almost impossible in doing so to avoid some measure of repetition.

There is no great difficulty in supposing that at the time when John de Cella became abbat in 1195, Wendover, who lived at any rate till 1235, was already a monk of St. Albans and about the age of thirty. When he became Prior of Belvoir we have no means of knowing, except that the date must have been before 1214. It seems to me quite impossible for anyone who has examined the MS. tradition and the internal characteristics of the works of Wendover, Matthew Paris and the so-called "Matthew of Westminster" to hold that what I have called the first section down to 1154 is throughout an original compilation by Wendover: and I am at least supported in this view by the fact that no one else who has ever undertaken the protracted and laborious work of examination and comparison has ever come to such a conclusion. The difficulty is not to determine that there is an original and older substratum, but its precise limits. The received theory, due to Sir Thomas Hardy and usually repeated *sicut moris est*, without re-examination, is that the first book, viz. from the Creation to the Incarnation, is "evidently derived from some compilation not now extant, which Wendover altered to suit his purpose. From the Creation to 231 he apparently amplified his exemplar; but from that year to the Incarnation, he seems to have made only a few deviations from it." [1] "The second book, extending from the Incarnation to 1235, is sub-divided into two parts.

[1] Hardy, *op. cit.*, iii, 80.

The first comes down to 1066; the second to the conclusion of the work. The text has the appearance of having been compiled from two distinct works, very different in styles. From 1014 to the death of King Stephen, the change of style is very perceptible."[1]

Let us consider the first book. Sir Thomas Hardy definitely states that "the matter of the First Book of the *Original Compilation*" includes extracts from Geoffrey of Monmouth, Florence of Worcester, William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntingdon, and Symeon of Durham. It does not need more than a moment's reflexion to show that if that be so the original compilation was a twelfth-century production. If I may state my own view for what it is worth, I regard the original compilation as going back probably to the time of Abbat Paul in the eleventh century, and as being mainly a summary of history, sacred and secular, down to the Incarnation, based on Scripture, Josephus, pagan and early Christian writers, with additions from the ninth-century Ado of Vienne. A more (or less) historical and certainly a more lively element was, I believe, given to the end of it, and possibly most of the second book was composed, in the time of Abbat Geoffrey (1119–46), the ex-schoolmaster, and his chief of the "antiquarii," Ralph Gubiun, abbat (1146–51), and it was, as I am inclined to think, at this time especially that the extracts from Geoffrey of Monmouth were introduced and possibly also some of those from William of Malmesbury. My critical faculty is unfortunately not sufficiently acute to

[1] Hardy, *op. cit.*, iii, 80.

enable me to detect so marked a change of style from 1014 to the death of Stephen as to compel me to suppose the existence of a separate document in that period.

Such, as the result of a patient examination to see what may be regarded as the original story and what its amplifications, seems to me, at any rate, the state, roughly speaking, in which the compilation stood when Wendover's work upon it began. So far as I can see there is not any substantial ground for supposing the existence before his time of any person in the monastery of St. Albans who occupied any position which could be officially and correctly described as that of historiographer. I will even go further and maintain that there is no adequate evidence to shew that Wendover himself held any such official position. The date when his work began cannot, as it seems, satisfactorily be placed earlier than the making of the copy of the *Historia Scholastica* of Petrus Comestor already referred to, since the influence of that work is seen upon the earliest part of the *Flores*. There is some justification for placing the date of the copy of Petrus Comestor's work about the year 1200, and there is nothing unreasonable in supposing that between that date and his appointment to Belvoir, whenever that happened, Wendover was engaged under Abbat John's eye in the labour of revision. It is usually assumed that he did not undertake the task until after his recall from Belvoir by John's successor, William de Trumpington, who became abbat in 1214, and that recall seems to have taken place some time not very long after the death of King John in 1216. It seems

to me much more probable that Wendover resumed a task which he had only laid aside perhaps three or four years before. There is, however, a curious feature in regard to what we have called the second section (1154-88) and attributed tentatively to Abbat John. That also has been revised, for under the year 1179 there is, as Mr. H. O. Coxe pointed out,[1] a reference to the Lateran Council of 1215: this part of the revision cannot therefore be earlier than that year. But I confess frankly that it seems to me that many critics have a very inadequate sense of the actual time which is required for the copying of a MS., quite apart from the added and very considerable labour involved by the process of revision, and supplementing the original which is being copied. It is a subject upon which my predecessor, Dr. S. R. Maitland, insists in a very striking and well-known passage,[2] and if a monk in a scriptorium enjoyed special facilities for regular work, we must remember at the same time that he is a monk, and that the Rule of St. Benedict, at any rate, is not primarily constructed with a view to providing scholars with the maximum amount of leisure for literary pursuits. The period from the Creation to A.D. 1154 is no inconsiderable portion of the world's history, and if by the time he became Prior of Belvoir, say in ten or twelve years from A.D. 1200, Wendover had completed the volume of *Flores Historiarum* down to the time of Henry II, which in the fourteenth century was attributed to him, and Abbat John then

[1] *Op. cit.*, ii, 402.

[2] *The Dark Ages*, 2nd edit. (Rivington, 1845), pp. 415 ff.

took up the story in the remainder of his life and carried it down to 1188, there would be little ground for saying that either had wasted much time. And when we remember that in addition to this Wendover is an original authority for at least forty-six years more (1189–1234), and that when he returned to St. Albans, soon after 1216, that history was already twenty-seven or twenty-eight years in arrear we shall probably be more, not less, inclined to suppose that his historical labours began before, not after, the unhappy interlude in his life which Abbat William brought to a close, harshly perhaps, but with great gain to posterity.

We must turn now to consider the character of the work which Wendover achieved. *Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona* as the first part of our survey of monastic chroniclers has endeavoured to illustrate; but even if we think that the fourteenth-century annotator is making rather a large claim in asserting that to Wendover "the chronographers of almost the whole realm owe whatever they have," [1] it will remain true that alike in scope and in general treatment his work does represent a great advance, both upon anything that St. Albans and anything that most of the other monastic scriptoria of England could shew. Over three hundred years ago it was pointed out that "all or the most part that is in the published *Matthew Paris*, until the nineteenth of *Henry* the third," is due to Wendover [2]; and though in saying this the learned Selden, whose name no Lambeth Librarian will ever

[1] *Cf.* p. 42, *supra*. [2] *Titles of Honour* (1614), ii, 5, § 15.

mention without honour and grateful reverence, was not speaking with quite unimpeachable accuracy, it is an amazing fact that the English student will still search in vain for any adequate or even approximately complete English edition of the Latin text of Wendover's work. Unless he has constant access to the MSS. he will have to reconstruct the work for himself as best he can from the *Flores Historiarum* called by the name of " Matthew of Westminster " (upon whom be peace, for he has caused much trouble) ; from the edition of Mr. H. O. Coxe for the English Historical Society, who allows himself liberties with the text which would make a modern editor shudder, and by deliberately omitting the earlier part makes a consistent judgement of the whole impossible ; from the three parcimoniously edited volumes in the Rolls Series ; and from the edition of Matthew Paris by Dr. Luard, in the same collection, of which we shall speak later. The writers of the Middle Ages, like those of the New Testament scriptures, have often suffered a little in the past from being edited by scholars who regarded them as careless if not ignorant reproducers of a debased form of classical Latin or Greek instead of as writers of a living language. In regard to the New Testament we have changed all that ; and the same improvement is taking place in regard to mediæval writings, though to a less extent. But it is not any mark of ingratitude if we say that in the " Rolls Series " itself we can trace the slow growth of an English school of historical technique for which we may be profoundly grateful, but which is a fact to be

borne in mind in judging of individual volumes that belong to the earlier stages.

What shall we say then of the work for which such great claims were once made but which has been almost completely cast into the shade by the fame of the stupendous achievement of Matthew Paris in its various forms? It is not improbable that the reader's attitude will become at an early stage intensely critical. We live in an age which is at last escaping from the bewildering consequences of Archbishop Ussher's chronology and in which the knot of many troublesome difficulties seems boldly to have been cut by many scholars of repute by the simple expedient of deciding that the established history of the Jewish people shall be conveniently assumed to begin at the Exodus and some of the most important sections of its literature with the Exile. Fortunately, or unfortunately, for himself and for us, to a twelfth-century monk the assured results of criticism were as yet unknown. Yet even then historical studies needed defence. He had, he tells us, to deal with those sluggish hearers (*auditores pigri*) who say, "What need to write the lives and deaths and diverse fates of men, and that the marvels of heaven and earth and the elements should be perpetuated?"[1] He appeals in his uninstructed simplicity to the example of Moses as historian and evolves for himself something like a philosophy of history, seeing in it a moral purpose which he does not always obtrude, but in which he firmly believes. If like others before

[1] Borrowed by Wendover from Robert de Monte as part of the Preface.

and since he speaks of the men of his own day as those upon whom the ends of the age are come, Wendover is seldom one of those in whom, as in the case of Thomas Walsingham, a later St. Albans writer, in the *Ypodigma Neustriæ*, the study of history induces a state of depression. His eye takes in a far prospect. He has to deal with the history of the world then known from the Creation downwards, and to establish synchronizations as best he can; and he draws his information from many sources. The amazing industry of Dr. Luard makes it easy for us to examine many of them for ourselves and to supplement other means of forming an estimate of the character of the original stratum of the *Flores* as well as of the form in which it passed from the hands of Wendover to those of Matthew Paris.

Let us examine the first few pages, for they will enable us to form for ourselves a picture of the monastic chronicler where he is definitely and deliberately not an original writer but a compiler. A quotation from Ado of Vienne, who lived in the ninth century, is followed by an extract from Eusebius-Jerome, and this by two sections which cannot in original composition be much earlier than the third quarter of the twelfth century. They are from the work so often referred to —the *Historia Scholastica* of Petrus Comestor *cum Allegoriis*, and relate to the Fall of Adam and the Deluge and Shem and Thrace. These in turn are followed by extracts from Pompeius Trogus, Augustine, Jerome, a quotation from the Book of Exodus, a passage from Orosius, Augustine again, then Isidore, two passages from Numbers, Augustine, Judges, and

Augustine once more. A mere cento, you say. Nay, rather a consecutive story, the pieces dovetailed not altogether inelegantly one into another

ut tesserulae omnes
Arte pavimento atque emblemate vermiculato.[1]

But was it worth doing? Judged by modern standards, possibly not. So Mr. Coxe rejects the whole down to the Birth of our Lord and almost all of the first 446 years after, because "with very few if any exceptions there is nothing contained in it having reference to the history of England upon which any reliance can with safety be placed."[2] He prints, however, the story of King Leir as being the foundation of one of Shakespeare's plays. These erudite persons take such limited views. We are endeavouring to understand the mind of a monastic historian at the end of the twelfth and beginning of the thirteenth century. And surely an effort at comparative history by such a man is itself a significant element in the English history of the period, even though his work should contain nothing *except the arrangement* which cannot be found scattered somewhere or other in the pages of Migne's *Patrologia* or similar collections. We may not attach much greater weight to the observation of a mediæval chronicler[3] that Eve was created on March 23 than to that of a learned American divine in Hastings' *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*[4] that "the rib is chosen for the material of her construction because ribs are relatively numerous, and therefore superfluous, in

[1] Lucilius, *ap.* Cic. *Orator*, c. 44. [2] Coxe, *op. cit.*, I, xii.
[3] "Matthew of Westminster," *Flores*, i, 2.
[4] Vol. IV, p. 152, note 1, Art. "Cosmogony (Hebrew)."

man's composition." But either instance contains a psychological datum of some importance for our judgement of the writer and of the world of ideas in which he lives.

So, again, it may not greatly matter to us now whether there is or is not any basis of probability in the view that Moses and the Exodus synchronize with the end of the reign of Cecrops at Athens, the foundation of Troja Nova, Trinovantum, London with the priesthood of Eli : that Brutus was in Britain while Saul was in Judæa : that Homer was a contemporary of the prophet Samuel ; that the foundation of York was earlier than the Temple of Solomon, while Bath and Leicester took their rise about the time of Elisha, and the death of Cordelia occurred at about the same time as the foundation of Rome. But at the time when these comparisons were made they represented a serious attempt at parallelism based on the assumption that the facts on both sides were facts. It is clear that for Wendover chronology, like genealogy, had a real interest of its own ; it seems to be his object to date if possible everything that can be dated. At the same time he is not writing mere chronological notes but history according to his lights ; and the construction of a consecutive narrative of events has been found to cause difficulties even to later writers. For the date of events on the Continent down to 1099 he takes as his principal, though not his only, authority Sigisbertus Gemblacensis, Sigebert of Gemblours ; and if Sigebert's own chronology is by no means impeccable, as it certainly is not, Wendover allows himself in addition a

good deal of freedom in using it. In regard to the time of events in England he had to take into account the views of Marianus Scotus, of whom he speaks as "chronicorum scriptor veracissimus," and to whose essays in chronology reference is made.[1] This is not the place for a discussion of the Dionysian Cycle, but one cannot help thinking that those who point with justice to the curious effect of Marianus' efforts, observable, for example, in the pages of Florence of Worcester, or emphasize the disastrous consequences of neglecting to observe the double dating of the beginning of years, are trying mediæval writers by unfair standards. This is not an effort to extenuate or explain away Wendover's mistakes, but to arrive at a reasonable standpoint in regard to them. Admittedly in his use of Bede he does sometimes play havoc with the chronology. He is quite awake to differences in the narratives at his disposal; though, as the account of the death of Germanus shews, he does not always understand where the truth lies, and either mistakes, for example, the meaning of Bede, or has a bad text of his work, or has himself been corruptly transmitted. As to the last possibility, the absence of a critical edition makes judgement very difficult without constant reference to the only two MSS. known wholly or in part. In honesty, however, we must add that a minute examination of all the passages where Wendover can be shewn or suspected to have used Bede leaves the balance of accuracy largely to Bede's credit, while in several cases Wendover in quoting Bede with or without acknow-

[1] *Ad ann.* 1028, 1052, Coxe, *op. cit.*, i, 468, 490.

ledgement omits Bede's note of the authority for the statement given. It must be remembered that quotation, even of *ipsissima verba*, without acknowledgement was to a mediæval writer as natural a proceeding as writing in his own name, and that the outcry—in itself largely partisan—occasioned by the famous plagiarism in Disraeli's eulogy of the Duke of Wellington would have been regarded as unintelligible if not unintelligent six hundred years earlier. If an author is quoted by name or indirectly it is to add importance to the quotation as quotation, to the statement as statement, not in the least out of a nice consideration for literary propriety or property. The author of the story of Barlaam and Josaphat had done it when he appropriated *en bloc* the Apology of Aristeides to serve a useful purpose, Bede himself did it without a qualm, and so did Wendover and hosts of others. It is not a question of what ought to be done now: it is a criticism of the somewhat futile animadversion occasionally made, by people who ought to have sufficient historical sense to know better, upon what was done then.

The same remarks will hold good with regard to citations taken from William of Malmesbury, who figures among Wendover's principal authorities, beside Florence of Worcester, Henry of Huntingdon with his curious fondness for proverbs and fondness for stories like that of Canute and the waves, and Geoffrey of Monmouth. Sometimes, *e.g.* as to Cedwalla,[1] Wendover notices a discrepancy between Geoffrey's work and Bede's but without deciding the difficulty, and it

[1] *Ad ann.* 686 Coxe, *op. cit.*, i, 181; *cf.* Bede, *H.E.* iv. 12.

is quite clear that, speaking generally, it did not occur to him that the character of the work of Geoffrey of Monmouth was such as to render him unworthy of credence. If what we have said above be justified, the case could perhaps scarcely have been otherwise ; and yet Wendover had read William of Malmesbury whose opinion has been quoted. Perhaps he felt, as many of us have done often and again, that it was a shame to spoil a succession of interesting stories, and his literary conscience was satisfied by calling attention from time to time to discrepant features. Yet we cannot conceal from ourselves that he takes,[1] apparently from Sigebert of Gemblours, the account of King Arthur's conquests in France—Paris, Anjou, Poitou, Gascony, and all Aquitaine—and if so omits entirely Sigebert's expressions of incredulity as to the incidents he is recording. And Wendover certainly has no scruple in interpolating Geoffrey of Monmouth in the middle of a passage of Bede before the account of Paulinus.[2]

I have sometimes been inclined to think that the judgement alike of Wendover and others with regard to the *Historia Britanniæ* was seriously affected by the presence in it of the " Prophecies of Merlin," one of the most amazing and, for those (and they are many even in our own day) who delight in such things, one of the most intriguing documents of its kind. Its influence was very widespread and long continued, and it influenced not only Wendover but Matthew Paris as well. Those who have not yet read the Prophecies

[1] *Ad ann.* 536, Coxe, *op. cit.*, i, 71.
[2] *Ad ann.* 634, Coxe, *op. cit.*, i, 132 ; *cf.* Bede, *H.E.* ii, 20 ; iii, 1.

will be hard to please if they do not enjoy doing so, for they vie in subtlety of allusion and in possibility of application with *Alice in Wonderland*. There you may find—I omit political allusions—the adumbration of modern feminine costume, "mulieres in gressu serpentes fient," medical women, the boar if not the "bear" of commerce, underground railways, submarines, and the electric light: at least I have done so, and no doubt others before me. And as originally interpreted it is unquestionable that the political allusions and the portents were taken seriously by serious historians: their fulfilment eagerly looked for and noted when found. Here too we may fittingly call attention to a feature which appears already in Bede, but became increasingly noticeable in later writers of history—the recording of portents and of extraordinary phenomena in the natural world, predictions which might be to the world in general, but as to which it was only human to look for a more distinguished application. "When beggars die there are no comets seen," and in Wendover and Matthew Paris, in very numerous monastic Annales and even much later than the Middle Ages, the record of the portent is accompanied by prognostications or inferences in regard to the course of human affairs. And fulfilment in a single instance was as irrefragable a basis for a universal conclusion to them as to Calpurnia, or to those of us who have not studied logic in the pages of Mr. Jevons, and even to some of those who have.

We have spoken already of monastic Annales and the predominantly local interests of many though not of

all their anonymous writers—local in the sense that the particular monastic house is for the most part in the centre of the picture throughout. It is important to remember that the case is quite otherwise with men like Wendover or Paris. I was once at pains to collect as I read all the references to St. Albans monastery and its fortunes contained in considerably more than a thousand printed pages of Wendover. They are by no means unimportant and quite enough to give what we may call a St. Albans atmosphere; but in actual bulk they form a very, very small proportion of the whole. The story of St. Alban and of St. Amphibalus, the Synod of St. Albans under Germanus and Lupus, Uther Pendragon's victory there over the Saxons in 512 and his murder, the destruction of the church, the magnificent benefactions of Offa or the gifts of Egfrith, the abbats' advance in dignity—this is nearly all that you will find in Mr. Coxe's first volume; and though after the Conquest the personality of the individual abbat naturally appears with somewhat greater particularity the general balance is hardly disturbed.

There are, no doubt, other features in which the monastic influence may be seen. You may cull from Wendover as you read a little basketful of quite interesting and often curious, if not always accurate, liturgical notes. You may be a little amused now and again at a rather too patent effort to improve the occasion, and to these you may be sure that an interested and pious reader will already have called attention in the margin of the MS. But, after all, this tendency is not peculiar to monastic historians: if

history conveys no lessons its readers must be blind or its writers stupid. But the effect desired may, of course, be produced in many different ways. The survey of the state of England at the time of the death of Bede may serve as an example of one[1]; the story of the Danish invasion[2] borrowed from Henry of Huntingdon and the attribution of its consequences to the decay of religion is another. Sometimes it must be admitted that in the desire for edification some curious illustrations are adduced. Thus Guthlac, out of his innate goodness, always gives back to its possessors one-third of the booty that he has taken from them[3]; and it is a mark (A.D. 319) of the piety of the Emperor Constantine that "Elefantino morbo percussus" he abstains from trying the remedy of bathing in the blood of three thousand boys. Sometimes there is a touch of humour, as when the Devil indites a letter of thanks to the clergy.[4] The story of Godric the hermit of Finchale was probably found more edifying in Wendover's day than it would be in ours[5]; and if the account of Gerbert, Pope Sylvester II, makes us rub our eyes in astonishment at the things which a mediæval monk might think it proper to relate of a Pope[6]—to whom at the same time, it must be added, he does grave injustice—the story of St. Wulstan Bishop of Worcester leaves a clear-cut impression of a good man which is unaffected by a critical estimate

[1] *Ad ann.* 734, Coxe, *op. cit.*, i, 224; *cf.* 345.
[2] *Ad ann.* 838, Coxe, *op. cit.*, i, 280.
[3] *Ad ann.* 714, Coxe, *op. cit.*, i, 207.
[4] *Ad ann.* 1072, Coxe, *op. cit.*, ii, 11.
[5] *Ad ann.* 1170, Coxe, *op. cit.*, ii, 340–54.
[6] *Ad ann.* 998, Coxe, *op. cit.*, i, 431 ff.

of some of the incidents of the story.[1] And here and there one cannot help thinking that these mediæval writers were better artists than some of their rather unimaginative critics are willing to allow. The terrible story[2] of the sufferings of St. Alphege—"he could not die"—is relieved by the insertion of the two legends borrowed from William of Malmesbury which follow, according to a psychological law which Shakespeare understood. And the critic who is shocked to find an account of the siege of Rochester by the Danes in the days of Alfred followed by a vision of Purgatory vouchsafed to the Emperor Charles the Fat must be left to console himself with the reflexion that it is dated as coming in chronological order in the next year.[3] If he goes on to indulge in a learned inquiry whether it should not rather have been assigned to Charles the Bald it will enable him perhaps to charge one more blunder to the debit of the unfortunate chronicler whose accounts he is investigating. But alas! it is not an isolated occurrence, for he will find the concord between King Stephen and Duke Henry[4] followed by no less than fifteen pages of an account of St. Patrick's Purgatory: "utile sed impertinens ad historiam Angliæ" perhaps, as Matthew Paris noted of another incident. And yet I do not know, and those who read it for its astonishing interest and remember that Wendover took it probably from another Englishman[5] will understand why as they note the implication of some of the

[1] *Ad ann.* 1095, Coxe, *op. cit.*, ii, 49 ff.
[2] *Ad ann.* 1011, Coxe, *op. cit.*, i, 439–40.
[3] *Ad ann.* 884, 885, Coxe, *op. cit.*, i, 339 ff.
[4] *Ad ann.* 1153, Coxe, *op. cit.*, ii, 255 ff.
[5] Henry of Saltrey or Salter?

things that it contains. But leave these cavils, with a parting gleam of satisfaction that one learned critic has allowed himself to say of a certain story that Henry of Huntingdon *agrees with Wendover*, and turn to the splendid march of the story of the Crusades. What does it matter that most of it comes from William of Tyre and that if you have read all the accounts in other authorities you will write some of it differently now? Or read the account of the reign of John or of the early years of Henry III, and see whether you will not be forced as I have been myself to concede to the writer real and considerable merit as historian. Owing to the way in which the printed editions, even Dr. Luard's are constructed, I formed a few years ago a prejudice against Wendover in comparison with Matthew Paris. This was really due to a failure to realize that much that appeared to be Paris was in fact Wendover's work or compilation, as I found when I came to study the MS. authority and to re-read the whole of Wendover himself for the purpose of this lecture. After this frank confession it may be allowable to add a note of warning for the benefit of others. A careful examination of ninety-two passages, in which the authority for a statement in Stubbs' *Constitutional History* is given as Matthew Paris, shews that in all but ten or at most thirteen cases the real authority is not Paris but Wendover. And if Matthew Paris for whom Wendover prepared the ground be still, as he is, the greater historian, we should be ungracious indeed to deprive of his meed of praise the first important chronicler of the St. Albans School.

## IV

THE modern student of the composition of the works of Matthew Paris as distinguished from the works themselves is perhaps chiefly conscious that he is entering upon a field of somewhat embittered controversy extending to the personality, accomplishments and handwriting of the author, the spelling of his name, the scope of his activities and even some of the most inportant facts of his life. Half a century has elapsed since the opening of the famous duel between Sir Frederic Madden, Keeper of the Department of MSS. of the British Museum and Sir Thomas Duffus Hardy, Deputy-Keeper of the Public Records:

> Exclamant Troes trepidique Latini
> Arrectaeque amborum acies.

But much, including Dr. Luard's monumental edition of the *Chronica Majora* in the "Rolls Series" has come between. In the first volume of his edition of the *Historia Minor*,[1] Sir Frederic Madden claimed as containing examples of Matthew Paris' own writing eight MSS. of which two are in the Parker Collection at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge (XXVI and XVI), one at Manchester (Chetham MS. 6712) and five in the British Museum, viz. four of the Cotton MSS. Julius

[1] *Matthæi Parisiensis . . . Historia Anglorum, sive . . . Historia Minor* (Rolls Series. London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1866).

D VII, Claudius D VI and Nero D I and V and one in the Royal Collection, 14 C VII. In the third volume of his *Descriptive Catalogue of Materials* (1871), Sir Thomas Hardy submitted his conclusions to an elaborate examination accompanied by twenty facsimiles from different MSS. likely to throw light upon the question at issue.[1] Conclusions of far-reaching importance based upon handwritings are of course precarious, especially when we are dealing with the case of a man who lived a long life and undoubtedly wrote much. And it is equally true that in the judgement of questions of this kind one man's opinion is emphatically not as good as that of any other. But rash as it may seem to have undertaken an independent examination extending over a considerable period and based on familiarity with at least some of the MSS. concerned, one who has done so may be justified in stating his conclusions since they inevitably affect his judgement of other matters of which he must speak and can be checked either by reference to the MSS. themselves, or, broadly speaking, to the facsimiles mentioned or others accessible. Judging solely on the ground of handwriting he would venture then to affirm, for the little that his judgement may be worth, that there are notes by Matthew Paris himself in Nero D I, and possibly, though doubtfully, in Nero D V: that the Royal MS. 14 C VII contains writing by Matthew Paris, but that it is not a holograph: that Claudius D VI, C.C.C.Oxon.

[1] The student should refer to a still later examination of part of the problem in the new "Catalogue of Royal MSS." just issued by the British Museum.

11 and C.C.C. Cambridge XXVI are not in the hand of Matthew Paris, though the other MS. at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge (XVI), probably contains some of his actual writing ; and lastly, with some considerable measure of confidence, that the Chetham MS. 6712 was not written by Matthew Paris if the facsimiles give a fair representation of the general writing of the MS. The net result of these conclusions (again it must be insisted for what they are worth) proves on examination to be clearly on the side of Sir Thomas Hardy rather than on that of Sir Frederic Madden. If correct it will entail the sacrifice apparently of an elaborate theory of peculiar spellings which have been associated with the School of St. Albans and traced to the influence of Matthew Paris, though as has been said the system of editing for the " Rolls Series " has the effect of making it impossible for the student to check his conclusions on matters of this kind, once he is separated from the MSS. themselves.

The examination was, at any rate, undertaken independently of all other considerations save handwriting, and it was not until after it was completed that a comparison of results shewed upon which side the conclusion had fallen. But confessedly it is a relief to find that so far as these conclusions may be justified on this basis we are not compelled to hold that Paris did not know how to spell so ordinary a Latin word as " magnus " or to accept without a quiver the suggestion that he was even in doubt whether his own name was Matthew or Matthias.[1] Still it must be granted

[1] *Hist. Angl.*, ed. Madden, I, xlviii ; III, vii ; *cf.* MS. Reg. 14 C VII.

that even as it is we are committed to some statements that are curious enough. We must accept of course his own note that he assumed the religious habit on St. Agnes' Day (Jan. 21), 1217. Yet he relates in a way which implies that he had personal knowledge of them events that happened at St. Albans in the course of the previous quarter of a century. Some of these cases might be accounted for, if with some difficulty, by assuming that the first person has been retained from an independent account, or that these events became known to him from participants years after they occurred; but it is very hard to be content with such an explanation of five several incidents. On the other hand, if we remember the story of Geoffrey the schoolmaster, the 16th Abbat, and of the father of Nicholas Breakspear, we shall probably not feel so great a difficulty as Sir Frederic Madden does [1] in supposing that Paris became a monk when he was already a man of at least thirty years of age. And it is, at any rate, a tenable hypothesis, though admittedly it is no more, that he had already been employed in the Abbey for some years as a craftsman or a scriptor. In the fourteenth century the *Liber Benefactorum* speaks of him as "an incomparable chronographer and a painter of supreme excellence," [2] and yet nearer to his own time the continuator of his *Vitæ Abbatum* calls him "a man of eloquence and renown," filled with virtues innumerable, a magnificent historiographer

[1] *Hist. Angl.*, III, xii.

[2] MS. Cotton Nero D VII, f. 50*b*: "incomparabilis cronographus et pictor peroptimus"; quoted by Madden, *Hist. Angl.*, III, p. xix.

and chronographer, an admirable dictator, who constantly revolved in his heart the saying that "leisureliness (*otiositas*) is the enemy of the soul."[1]

Upon this passage we may venture to make two remarks. One may be allowed to pass as uncontroversial. It is that the description of Paris as "dictator egregius," which reminds us of what had been said earlier by Bede,[2] has received too little attention. Yet it is clear that a process of multiplying books by a method in which one dictated and others wrote, which was certainly characteristic of secular scribes, may well account for some peculiarities in MS. copies and might explain also how a good deal of the amount of work attributed to Paris was possible. But the second observation will not so easily meet with acceptance. Many of us have heard the statement, often repeated though it does not come from the Middle Ages, that in monasteries of royal foundation or benefaction there was in recognition of the connexion an official who acted as a sort of Historiographer or Chronographer Royal. This statement, which in the case of William Rishanger, who succeeded Matthew Paris, has been improved into the assertion that he was hired by the King at a salary is a merely fantastic invention of John Bale and those who followed his lead, and is now, I believe, universally discredited. But it is otherwise with the generally received opinion expressed in the view enunciated by Sir Thomas Hardy[3]

[1] *Gesta Abb.*, i, 394: "historiographus ac chronographus magnificus, dictator egregius."

[2] *Supra*, p. 5.

[3] *Catalogue*, III, xxxvi; *cf.* the passages noted above, pp. 28 ff.

that at some time between 1161–83 there was established an office of chief scribe or Historiographer of St. Albans. I have done what I can to shew cause against this view, not (so far as I am conscious) from prejudice, for I should like it to be true, but simply because the evidence for it seems to me on examination completely to break down. But Sir Thomas Hardy held the view with the tenacity with which most of us hold conclusions that we have excogitated for ourselves. It seems presumptuous to criticize a man to whom we all of us owe an incalculable debt of gratitude. Yet just as I suspect that Geoffrey of Monmouth probably believed the *Historia Britanniæ* to be true because he had himself compiled it, and George IV believed that he had been present at Waterloo because, as the Duke of Wellington is reported to have answered an appeal for confirmation, "I have often heard your Majesty say so," so Sir Thomas Hardy, having evolved the office of Historiographer, and having, as we have seen, proceeded to fill it, was moved also to frame regulations for the government of the office. In the case of Matthew Paris the result is serious. Thus we read: "That none of the works now ascribed to [Matthew Paris] were composed during the life of his predecessor, Wendover, may be taken for granted." . . . "That I conceive," says Sir Thomas Hardy, "would not have been permitted him by the rules of his order. The assistant to Wendover he might have been, but joint historiographer by no means." [1] One may hope that it is not disrespect-

[1] *Descriptive Catalogue*, III, xliv.

ful to a great authority to urge once more that so far as any evidence that a really painful search can discover affords us information the office of Historiographer of St. Albans regarded as a distinct office to which there was a regular succession with the regular duties of general chronicler assigned to it is in that form an invention not of the latter half of the twelfth, but of the nineteenth century. We shall be wiser to confine ourselves to such statements as that Matthew Paris was "a magnificent historiographer and chronographer," and the note in Cotton MS., Nero D V at A.D. 1234, even though it be possibly misplaced by a year: "Dom Roger of Wendover, sometime Prior of Belvoir, up to this point digested his chronicles, *Incipit frater Matthæus Parisiensis*," and so he continued it down to the year 1250 or 1253.

The work of Matthew Paris as a whole is so considerable in extent that it is impossible to deal with it, except summarily, in a brief compass. Let us look at him first in a more restricted sphere, as a writer not of general but of particular and local history. We will not stay to discover whether or not a "Life of St. Alban" or the work called the "Lives of the Two Offas" be correctly attributed to him. Let us take a work of indisputable genuineness, the Lives of the first twenty-three Abbats of St. Albans, known probably to most as the first part of the greater compilation —the *Gesta Abbatum* of Thomas Walsingham, in the fourteenth century. Here the monastic writer is upon his own ground: he is telling the story of his house for the instruction or warning of his own brethren,

noting the vicissitudes of the monastery in growth or decay of buildings or fortunes or ornaments, the character of its rulers and the ordinances which affect its daily life. And it must be admitted that the tale is told with surprising frankness. Some of us may remember that in the story of the thane of King Kenred of Mercia, which Wendover [1] borrowed from Bede, the thane has a vision of the Judgement. He sees produced two books : one is the record of his good deeds—it is of exceeding beauty but it is very small—" liber perpulcher sed valde modicus." The other contains his offences—a codex horrid to behold and of enormous size and of weight almost impossible to carry. Similarly here there is a very curious feature about many of the later biographies. Paris tells the story of achievement in each case with a real desire to shew his brethren what like man he was whom he is describing, as well as what he did for the abbey. The appreciation is usually generous, sometimes enthusiastic. And then there seems to cross his mind the thought : This is not all the story, and the historian is not, ought not to be, the mere panegyrist. And so there comes toward the end a sudden change introduced by a varying form of words. Let me quote an example. " Abbat Paul lived thereafter some four years, and all things that he began he laudably completed. But because there is no man who does not sin, let us talk a little more—about the things that he neglected to do." [2] Sometimes Paris calls these things

[1] *Ad ann.* 707, Coxe, *op. cit.*, i, 200 ; *cf.* Bede, *H.E.*, v, 13.
[2] *Gesta Abbatum*, i, 61 ; *cf.* 71, 215, 193, 300.

the Abbat's "negligences and ignorances," as when Abbat Richard acknowledged an obligation of obedience to the Bishop of the Diocese, though the abbey was exempt even from Canterbury—a circumstance which gave rise at different times to some curious, as well as to some rather pleasing, stories. Of Abbat Warin it is said: "in the journey of this pilgrim life there is none who doth not sin nor can be so watchful but that *quandoque bonus dormitet Homerus*"—the tag from Horace comes in with quaint incongruity. Once because the abbat's services, *e.g.* those of Abbat Simon had been great the formula is changed to "Because there lives not a man upon the earth without offence, not even an infant of one day," or, best of all, of William the 22nd Abbat we read, "his negligences and wrongdoings we do not relate, because in respect of his benefits they are altogether nothing nor anywise to be regarded."

In regard to some of the earliest abbats the tone is distinctly critical, and this is not merely a prejudice against Saxons. There are such grievous negligences to be remembered as the failure to secure the remains of King Offa,[1] in which we may see, if we like, jealousy of another place; but it may only be a sense of what is becoming or it may be the omission to secure a valuable piece of evidence for the confusion of gainsayers. But the attire of Wulsig, the 3rd Abbat, is clearly open to unfavourable remark in a spiritual son of St. Benedict: he used silken garments, *phaleratus incedens*.[2] We look up "Phaleræ" in the dictionary

[1] *Gesta Abb.*, i, 7.

[2] *Ibid.*, i, 10. Of Wulnoth we are told that he changed the our and form of the "cuculla" and "froccus" (*ibid.*, p. 11);

and discover them to be "the trappings of horses or the hair ornaments of women," and are further told that the word is "hence often used by ecclesiastical writers to denote the futile adornments of the world." He died "potionatus," *i.e.* poisoned, to be succeeded by Wulnoth, who was as bad or worse; for he reared sporting dogs and birds and put on sporting clothes. One cannot help wondering what Frater Matthæus would have thought of the modern costume of some of the younger clergy—and we are reminded that we are reading a description by one of the most successful artists that any monastery ever had. A vignette of a different kind shews us the relations at Harrow of Abbat Simon and Becket, who received from St. Alban his first honour and his last; and the Archbishop's jest: "His presents are acceptable, his presence could be even more so."[1] In candour we ought to add that the chronicler deems it necessary to explain the pun as he translates it from French to Latin, whether as an apology for the bad Latin that it compels him to write or for the benefit of inmates of the abbey's cell at Tynemouth it would be inexpedient to inquire. Here again you may see our old friend, Adam the Cellarer, granting a corrody for a female recluse[2] or two claimants for corrodies deciding the matter *more Anglorum* in a boxing match[3]; or John de Waldene caring like a busy bee (*apis argumentosa*) for the concerns of the daughter house of St. Mary de Pratis[4];

of Leofric the 10th Abbat, that he used clothes of purple albeit of dark shade, and was a "respecter of persons," for he would only admit monks of good birth (*ibid.*, p. 31).

[1] *Gesta Abb.*, i, 184–5. [2] *Ibid.*, i, 305. [3] *Ibid.*, i, 273.
[4] *Ibid.*, i, 201.

or Abbat Geoffrey bestowing part of what was intended for St. Alban's shrine upon the starving poor—an act which gives rise to some searching of heart and a discussion whether such a course be justifiable.[1] In a few vivid strokes we are shewn the Abbat of St. Albans taking first place among the Abbats of England at the General Council of Tours in 1163, or sharing in the deliberations of the Lateran Council of 1215, or, more vividly still, in a poignant scene an abbat "on the carpet" (*super tapetium*) as John de Cella kneels in the chapter house of St. Albans in humble penitence at the place they call *Judicium*—the Judgement.[2] In some sections it seems to me almost certain that we can discern a stratum earlier than Matthew Paris' own work and attributable as I think to Adam the Cellarer's influence—they are passages relating to the abbey's material goods. Incidental notices shew us changes of costume as the generation pass, and the view taken of a change to shoes of better leather and even the substitution of boots for shoes but with rounded toes. These are serious matters. What a contrast, thinks Walsingham later,[3] to modern luxury is shewn by the discovery in the cemetery in the time of John 23rd Abbat of the bodies of some monks of ancient time, brothers of our house, sons of St. Benedict. Their shoes were round back and front—the passage is so famous that one almost apologizes for repeating it again—still good after 180 years and able to be worn on either foot. *Erubescant moderni*, let the men of our day blush, he says, clothed as they are in soft raiment subtly wrought

[1] *Gesta Abb.*, i, 82; *cf.* 30, 96. [2] *Ibid.*, i, 245. [3] *Ibid.*, i, 366.

of precious stuff, nor marvel at the sweet savour of these holy men who followed St. Benedict's rule in its simplicity. We shall be unwise to form too elaborate an estimate of the sartorial refinements of a St. Albans monk in the fourteenth century from Walsingham's rhetorical comparison. The language of the reformer whether in food or in clothes is usually chastened in its purpose rather than its tone. We know that there had been a time when wine had been given up by the monks for fifteen years in order to provide funds for building the new refectory and the new dormitory.[1] And in the days of this same 23rd Abbat, only now the account comes not from Walsingham 180 years later but from Matthew Paris his contemporary, it is recorded among his singular merits that he made provision for the improvement of the abbey's beer which "alike to our damage and to our disgrace was weak beyond all measure." The critics are sometimes in danger of forgetting that monks are human beings—a mistake that St. Benedict never made. Matthew Paris with his own multifarious pursuits knew that sameness (*identitas*) in the cloister produces Accidie, and tells how the monks greeted with relief Abbat Warin's recognition that that long story of the Invention of St. Stephen and his companions was burdensome to us to listen to, and his scheme of shortened services based on a "resecatio superfluitatis."[2]

As might be expected in a work of this kind there are frequent references to charters and other evidences, genuine and false, and the places where they will be

[1] *Gesta Abb.*, i, 220; *cf.* 323. [2] *Ibid.*, i, 211, 212 ff.

found,[1] to the abbey seal and precautions for its security. We are shewn a picture of the chamber of a dying abbat and the attempt to secure his assent to a deed of grave consequence when his bodily powers have utterly failed, and though the mind shews intermittent gleams of comprehension now and again, the pulse of life is ebbing fast.[2] Or the still more amazing scene where the Papal legate takes the new charter between his teeth and tears it in pieces. We are told again of many a beautiful book like that missal of Abbat Richard (1097-1119) used for the Missa Matutinalis: in the beginning of it is painted his picture at the feet of the Majesty. We hear, too, of the fame and work of craftsmen within the Abbey, men of whom any age and any house might have been proud —Dom Anketill or Master Baldewyn, Walter and William of Colchester, or Fr. Richard *artifex optimus*. Nor are sidelights upon education wanting, whether it be in the account of Offa's benefactions and the reputed origin of Peter's pence for the maintenance of the English School in Rome[3] or the court of Canute *quasi schola civilitatis*,[4] or the schools at Dunstable and at St. Albans than which it is piously said there is none better nor more fruitful in England.[5]

And, of course, there are sudden large interpolations

[1] *Cf.*, for example, I, 222, 224, 295.

[2] *Ibid.*, i, 247 ff.; *cf.* 257. [3] *Ibid.*, i, 5. [4] *Ibid.*, i, 90.

[5] *Gesta Abb.*, i, 196. This is said of the school in the town of St. Albans in the days of Master Matthew Warin, a secular and successor of Alexander "Nequam." Some fifty or sixty years later it is said of the Abbat himself (John 23rd Abbat) that "multi nobiles e regno suos liberos educandi gratia suæ custodiæ commendabant —probably as a "schola civilitatis" (*ibid.*, i, 397).

—symbols, if you like, of the *amicabilis concordia* which linked the two great schools of history and romance in an age outworn. Here are strange stories of hermits and recluses,[1] including that of the hermit of Northawe whose devotions were disturbed by nightingales and of their removal by supernatural means to a radius of one mile.[2] Here are incidents still more remarkable, for which the reader finds himself journeying from St. Albans to Ely, to Norway, or to Spain in following the fortunes of St. Alban's bones—incidents of which, especially in relation to Ely, the best that we can say is that while few of the parties concerned seem to have felt the restriction of ordinary conventions of honesty or truth, upon the whole it would seem that justice was satisfied.

Now and again, as we have seen, the life of the great world outside touches the Abbey with results sometimes, but by no means always, advantageous to its finances. It may be in the visit of a King like Stephen, or Henry II, a Solomon of thirty who has theories[3] of his own as to ways of testing the genuineness of records, and while objecting strongly to a privilege granted to the Abbey by Celestine II makes the pregnant observation with regard to the Abbey's freedom in the election of its abbat: "They all enjoy the like privileges, but none the less in such a case we always bend all privileges to our will."[4] It may be seen again in the redemption of the chalices pledged for the ransom of King

[1] *Gesta Abb.*, i, 97–106. [2] *Ibid.*, i, 105. [3] *Ibid.*, i, 151.
[4] *Ibid.*, i, 153: Omnes simili gaudent privilegio, et nos tamen semper, in tali casu, omnia privilegia nostræ inclinamus voluntati."

Richard I,[1] or in some caustic reflexion upon the ways of lawyers—" as it is the wont of eminent legists to love gifts and to seek rewards "[2]—or observations equally biting in relation to the Abbey's offerings to Pope Adrian, and Abbat Robert's knowledge that the Romans are always sons of the horse-leech and thirsting for money.[3] It is no isolated instance: in other cases they send a chalice and paten to Rome, as it is recorded, " to still the avarice of Pope Celestine "[4]; Pope Innocent III does not disdain to ask for a present[5]; they make an offering of money to Gregory IX, who does not even take the trouble to ask their representatives to dinner. His treasurer, it is noted, is a Franciscan, and dearly enough they paid for the apostolic benediction and obtained grace from that venal court.[6] When the obligation of triennial visits *ad limina apostolorum* was extended from bishops to abbats it is regarded as an unheard-of burden rather than a spiritual privilege; and Matthew Paris tells us of Abbat John's inquiry of the Bishop of London what he was to do when he got there. " Make an offering, my friend," was the answer, and " Truth," says the chronicler, " lay hidden in the saying." And yet the papal seal with the image upon it which they fastened on the top of the Abbey tower proved wholly ineffective as a protection against lightning.[7]

There is not the smallest reason to suppose that these incidents are not true, and the theory of later inter-

[1] *Gesta Abb.*, i, 214. [2] *Ibid.*, i, 243. [3] *Ibid.*, i, 127.
[4] *Ibid.*, i, 93. [5] *Ibid.*, i 263. [6] *Ibid.*, i, 308.
[7] *Ibid.*, i, 311, 313.

polation may be safely disregarded. But it must be remembered that the inferences we draw, if they are to be just, must be based upon a knowledge of Papal finance and of the history of the *Curia Romana* which is seldom possessed by those most zealous in the quest of materials for controversy.

Matthew Paris' share of the *Gesta Abbatum* ends, as has been said, with the life of John the 23rd Abbat —the abbat who did not enrich his relations—"a merit," we are told, "which can be ascribed with truth to none, or, at any rate, to few of his predecessors." [1] As this portion of his work receives less attention than the *Chronica Majora* or the *Historia Anglorum* we may be excused for calling attention to certain more technical details. First, in the relation of some incidents, *e.g.* the Danish treatment of St. Alban's bones, we can see apparently two separate accounts, one earlier than the other, side by side. Secondly, there are notable references to books from which stories are derived—of one, a History of St. Alban, it is related that it survived until it had been translated and then fell to dust.[2] There are also references to other works, like the Customary, to which reference may be made, or like the volume of Additamenta, in which documents were transcribed for record or for future use. Again, there are distinct traces of the way in which a work of this kind came to be used, both as itself a formal

[1] *Gesta Abb.*, i, 323.
[2] *Ibid.*, i, 27.

record of documents and also as a precedent book.[1] Fourthly, no difficulty is felt in transferring even a long section like the story of the Emir Murmelius from one work to another, even where there is no additional information to be supplied which might seem to require the re-telling of the story. And lastly, we shall be quite mistaken if we regard a composition of this kind as having the finality of a printed volume. There are gaps still left in order that data may be filled in upon further inquiry, *e.g.* as to the number of days of a certain indulgence or the precise amount of an abbot's debts. There is even, at least so it seems to me, a sentence to be seen in process of composition, two alternative forms being reproduced by the copyist.

When the *Gesta Abbatum* came to be amplified by Thomas Walsingham in the fourteenth century, the work of Matthew Paris for the earlier part was incorporated in the new book, though with some alterations including, in one or two cases, the transfer of quite long passages to other volumes. Let us repeat with emphasis that the work of a mediæval chronicler, especially if he were a monk, was not invested with the sanctity that attaches to the publications of an author in our own day. If we are to look for a modern parallel, perhaps the nearest that we shall find will be the treatment commonly given to a treatise on some branch of medicine or law which has become a standard

[1] There is a curious illustration of this in the section I, 301 ff., in relation to the death of William the 22nd Abbat in 1235 and the appropriate ceremonies: "We never saw a more beautiful corpse" (*non enim vidimus mortuum speciosiorem*).

textbook and undergoes successive revision, sometimes by the original author, often by other hands, with the consent of himself or his representatives. And Walsingham's modifications of Matthew Paris were but a feeble reproduction of a process which Paris himself had applied, and was justified in applying, to the works of his predecessors with a larger canvas on a grander scale.

## V

When Matthew Paris decided to undertake his *Chronica Majora* he had before him the work of Roger of Wendover and quite possibly—I am myself inclined to say, almost certainly—the original *Flores Historiarum*. Whether there were also other "historiales libri Sancti Albani"[1] in the aumbries of the Abbey we can form no certain opinion: it is likely enough. The date when he began to work affords matter for dispute. There does not seem any reason, except preconceived ideas, for supposing that he had done nothing in the way of revision down to the time of Wendover's death, when on any hypothesis he had been already eighteen years a monk; yet this is not uncommonly assumed almost as axiomatic. It seems to me natural to suppose that his purpose at the outset was merely to make a new copy of the great work which Wendover had compiled, perhaps was still compiling. The alterations that he introduced in the earliest part are not very considerable in quantity and scarcely such as Wendover would have been likely to have disapproved. One early omission, the section on the "Distinctiones regionum," is interesting because we know that Paris was a student of geography, or at least there is some ground for the supposition: it is

[1] *Chronica Majora* (Rolls Series), v, 384.

paralleled—perhaps, as he thought, compensated—by an insertion later of the districts of the world undertaken as their provinces by the Apostles, which shews that he has been reading Rabanus Maurus.[1] The omission of some early pagan stories may be only to lighten the load ; it is scarcely likely that he regarded them with any disapprobation, and he finds space for the insertion of a long passage about the Sibylline Books. In any case it is certain that he cannot have regarded the early portion with a very critical eye, or he could not have passed, as he does, Wendover's explanation of the *Quo vadis?* story, viz. that St. Peter understood that by His answer the Lord meant that He who suffers in His saints was about to suffer afresh in the person of Peter himself.[2] And if he accepts, as he does, Wendover's statement that the Picts under King Rodricus came from Scythia to the Northern part of Britain and married Irish women and that from their union came the Scots,[3] it was probably regarded in a monastery which had a cell at Tynemouth as a natural and adequate explanation of the racial characteristics of a barbarous people. When Paris comes to the Prophecies of Merlin there is a marginal insertion giving the interpretation, from the character of which one could judge that a large portion was regarded, whether by Alanus de Insulis or Paris himself, as still awaiting fulfilment, since it is scarcely likely that the ingenuity of either had failed.

[1] *Chronica Majora*, i, 101 ff. ; *cf.* the Life of Mary Magdalen, by Rabanus, c. 36 (Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, CXII, cc. 1490–93).
[2] *Chron. Maj.*, i, 109. [3] *Ibid.*, i, 113.

For the purpose of the historical student it is, however, more important to examine the way in which Paris dealt with the later portion of the work. It will be remembered that in Sir Thomas Hardy's judgement Wendover, "from the commencement of the reign of Henry II down to the year 1200, . . . was evidently his own compiler. From 1200 to 1235, he may be esteemed as an original writer."[1] I should myself, for the reasons already given, venture to put back the date of his original work to 1189. But as between Wendover and Paris a striking contrast has been drawn from a particular point of view which seems to need consideration. In J. R. Green's *Short History of the English People*[2] there is a curious note prefixed to the section on the reign of King John, in which it is said that the Chronicle of Roger of Wendover was subsequently revised and continued "in a more patriotic tone" by Paris; and again, before the account of the reign of Henry III, that Wendover is "full but inaccurate and with strong royal and ecclesiastical sympathies," whereas of Paris we are told later that "the story of this period of misrule is preserved to us by an annalist whose pages glow with the new outburst of patriotic feeling which this common oppression of the people and the clergy had produced."

Now it is quite true that, judged by a modern standard, Wendover is frequently inaccurate, but it may be doubted whether anyone who examines

[1] *Catalogue of Materials*, III, 80; *cf.* pp. 43–4 *supra*.
[2] New edition revised (Macmillan, 1916), pp. 122, 141, 146.

minutely the *Chronica Majora* and the *Flores Historiarum* down to the year 1200 will come to the conclusion that, except in a very few instances, Paris shews any special desire to correct those inaccuracies or indeed any recognition of their existence. He makes, of course, especially in the part relating to the twelfth century, numerous additions as he does later, because he has access to further sources of information or has observed omissions that can readily be supplied. In regard to the period from 1200–1235, where both men are writing of events vividly present before their minds, the writing of Matthew Paris is certainly more vivacious than that of Wendover: we smile more often as we read, for Paris "allowed his temperament to colour his history," as Professor Bury has said of Gibbon, and what to one reader will seem the unaffected utterance of simple piety towards established institutions to another will appear a sardonic irony against which the only defence is a sense of humour. And we do not wonder that Cardinal Baronius was shocked.[1]

But it must always be remembered that Paris had the advantage of having Wendover before him: it is easy to heighten an impression by an epithet or an interpolated sentence, and no doubt sometimes the effect will appear much more satisfactory in consequence to a later historian whose own sympathies are deeply engaged. Yet there are many to whom sober restraint is more effective than rhetoric, however patriotic, and Green's criticism is, one may be

[1] *Annales*, ad ann. 1197.

allowed to think, on the whole unjust to Wendover. However, our present concern is with the spirited pages of Matthew Paris. For eighteen, even perhaps for twenty-four, years of the reign of Henry III he is one of our main authorities. But both as to his position at St. Albans and his opportunities for gathering materials language is sometimes used which can hardly be described as anything but exaggerated. Though king and princes, bishops and nobles were among his informants in regard to events of his time his position was in no sense analogous to that of an official historian of our own day. *Mutatis mutandis* it much more closely resembled, as it seems to me, that of Bede, with the important exception that unlike Bede Paris had travelled much, and from the position of St. Albans as compared with that of Wearmouth had naturally a larger acquaintance with the people who were making history. Some of them, like the king himself in an often quoted story, were keenly anxious that events in which they had taken a prominent part should be carefully recorded.[1] And the carefulness of the record was sometimes greater than the sympathy. Readers will remember that the exactions of Henry III are described with little less vigour than that with which Paris has heightened, without improving, Wendover's sober colours in the character of King John. But let us take a less well-worn incident. One of the sufferers from the king's need for money (we are told elsewhere[2] that at one time his debts were such that the interest alone amounted to £100 a day) was Aaron

[1] *Chron. Maj.*, iv, 644. [2] *Gesta Abb.*, i, 383.

the famous Jew of York. Thirty thousand marks of silver has he paid to the King and 200 marks of gold to the Queen—so he tells Fr. Matthew the writer of this page; and he calls his Law and his Faith to witness that what he says is true.[1] But the section ends with the comment upon the race in general: "None the less although they are pitiful, to none are they pitiable,[2] for as debasers and forgers of the royal money, seals and charters have they manifestly and frequently been proved condemned and reprobated." Or take another instance in the same volume—the impassioned, if fruitless, appeal of Isabella Countess of Arundel to Henry III for justice, which leaves the King silent—*satis civiliter redargutus*—but incorrigible.[3] Such frankness has its difficulties and no less its dangers, as Paris himself complains in a well-known passage[4]—alike for this world and the next. And it is not surprising to find sections like the description of the abortive duel of Hugh Count of the March,[5] with its casual observation in regard to his wife Isabella, sometime Queen of England, that the Franks and Poitevins thought from her character that her right name was Jezebel, marked in the margin "*Cave quia offendiculum.*" I have sometimes wondered how far, if at all, these notes (and they are not few) are due to the representations of ecclesiastical superiors or to the greater caution of advancing age. The amazing and in its extent almost unique feature of the MSS.

[1] *Chronica Majora*, v, 136.
[2] *Ibid.*: "Etsi miseri sint, nulli tamen sunt miserabiles."
[3] *Op. cit.*, v, 336–7. [4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Chron. Maj.*, iv, 252.

of Matthew Paris is that we can see the work of an historian of nearly seven hundred years ago both in its original and in its altered form, and to some degree in the intermediate stage. Yet certainly if all offence was to be avoided, whether *scandalum magnatum* or *offendiculum amicorum*, the work of revision would have had to be carried much further; and for that reason, as well as for others, it seems quite possible that in a good many passages that have actually been re-written and in which we have before us the original form—the account of Archbishop Boniface of Savoy is the stock example—the alteration is due to a real change of view.

As is well known some of the marginal directions for omission have a different purpose. The passages are to be omitted because the *Chronica Majora* is being used as the groundwork of the *Historia Minor*, or *Historia Anglorum*, as it is now called, and for English history much that appears in the larger work would be impertinent, however useful in other regards. That work is an abridgement, but it is not a mere abridgement, and there is in it sufficient of added material to give it *pro tanto* an independent value. Sir Frederic Madden, in the preface to the third volume of his edition, has collected a list of these amplifications arranged under the different reigns, from the Conquest to 1253.

It would be as easy as delightful to enlarge upon other characteristics of Matthew Paris, if time allowed. But there are three or four observations which I desire to make for special reasons. The first three

may be not without importance, because they go, as the saying is, to credit. The great Casaubon (whose *obiter dicta*, however perverse, have always forced themselves on my notice since under the influence of Mark Pattison's *Life* of him, which I found in my school library, I read his *Ephemerides*) says, I think in the Prolegomena to his *Exercitationes* on the errors of Baronius, that no one ever lived who was more addicted than Matthew Paris to the superstitions of Popery. The remark is made with a view to a polemical contrast, but the reference would seem to be to the marvellous stories of miracles and other matters relating to the sphere of the supernatural, of which the pages of Matthew Paris contain a considerable store. It seems but a poor attempt at defence to suggest that he took very many of them over from Wendover, though it is true. By adopting them in his own narrative he incurred responsibility for them. Whether he believed all of them or not we cannot know. But what is important to remember is that they are illustrations, amplifications, foils: they are never, so far as I can remember, unfairly used like the interventions in Homer or Vergil. And in general they are independent of the main course of the *Chronica Majora* which remains in spite of them, if you will have it so, regarded as a whole, the greatest achievement in the writing of history made by any Englishman in the later Middle Ages.

The second observation is in regard to incidents belonging to Matthew Paris' own time, which he relates as facts and which, it is alleged, are not true.

They are not very many, but we may take one example, because it is of a peculiarly startling kind, and Matthew Paris certainly makes himself responsible for it, since he uses it both in the *Vitæ XXIII Abbatum* [1] and in the *Chronica Majora*.[2] In both he gives the same account of the embassy of King John to the Emir Murmelius, at a crisis of his fortunes, with an offer to become tributary and to embrace the Moslem faith. The Emir, you will remember, is found seated at a desk reading the writings of St. Paul in Greek, and in the remarkable series of interviews which follows is represented as making exceedingly caustic comments, both upon the offer and the character of the King who made it and the people who were content to submit to his rule. John, whose appearance is described by one of the envoys, is said to be whitehaired, though only in the fifties. There are admittedly chronological difficulties in the account, and it is wildly improbable that King John ever offered to become a Muhammadan. But the story is given as having been told by Robert of London, one of the envoys, "in the hearing of Matthew Paris himself who wrote and told these things." I confess that it seems to me that in spite of chronological difficulties that last statement is one that we must accept. Of course, Robert of London may have been an accomplished liar, and the evidence that he produced derived from other sources. But I do not believe that Matthew Paris invented the story, and seems to me safer from incidental confirmations to assume that an embassy of some kind was sent with

[1] *Gesta Abb.*, i, 236 ff. [2] *Chron. Maj.*, ii, 559–64.

a desire to secure support, and even, I think, to Morocco, not to Spain, as seems usually to be supposed to be alone possible.

Thirdly—since to err is human and even historical critics are not exempt—it must be admitted that Matthew Paris does sometimes make definite and undeniable mistakes in the citation of authorities. But a writer's work must be judged as a whole, and though it is no doubt a serious blunder to quote a statement really made by William of Malmesbury as occurring in the *Historia Britonum* of Geoffrey of Monmouth, to take an instance of a mistake which one would not have expected, such instances are not common. It is, of course, no argument, but it is fair to remember the mediæval archdeacon who quotes Ecclesiastes as St. Paul or even some, it may be persons not without distinction, in our own day for whom "tempering the wind to the shorn lamb" has all the sanctity of Scripture.

One may well wish for space to do more than point to the light thrown incidentally in the various writings of Matthew Paris upon the manners and customs and language of the people. It seems clear from one passage that in the middle of the twelfth century the monks of St. Albans, like Roger the hermit of Markyate, spoke English,[1] though Becket and the Abbat seem to have talked French.[2] We know from a strange story which Paris relates, herein following Wendover, that William Longchamp, Bishop of Ely and Chancellor in the reign of Richard I, could not talk English at all,[3]

[1] *Cf. Gesta Abb.*, i, 99. [2] *Gesta Abb.*, i, 185. [3] *Chron. Maj.*, ii, 382.

but the fact was beginning to be regarded as unusual, and Becket of course was possessed of the *trilinguis eruditio*. In his day that meant a knowledge of Latin and French and English[1]: three centuries later, in the pages of Erasmus, a *homo trilinguis* is one who knows Latin and Greek and Hebrew.[2] It is a difference of which the significance is not easily overestimated, for in it lies the germ of modern civilization. In comparison with the age of Erasmus the world of Matthew Paris may seem to you limited and its knowledge poor, though one could wish for a Matthew Paris with all his limitations to draw for us a picture of Cardinal Morton or of Henry VII in the margin of his manuscript or in his text, or better still in both: to pourtray for us the "Great Harry" or describe the wonders of the new world with the same freshness and ingenuity as that wonderful picture of the elephant sent by St. Louis to Henry III in 1255 which we would fain believe to be from his pen.

And his "Liber Additamentorum," to which by an elaborate system of cross references the *Chronica Majora* send us again and again, would have filled many a sad gap as it fulfilled its double purpose as a notebook and a repository of documents regarded as important for preservation even if they could not be quoted in full in the history itself. Enshrined in the

[1] In the Murmelius story it is said of the English race that it "tribus pollet idiomatibus erudita, scilicet, Latino, Gallico, et Anglico; et omni arte liberali et mechanica plenius erudita. *Gesta Abb.*, i, 237; *Chron. Maj.*, ii, 561.

[2] *Cf.* the letter of Erasmus to John Botzheim (*Op. Epp. Des. Erasmi*, ed. P. S. Allen [Oxon, 1906], i, 35, etc.) in 1523.

Cotton MS., Nero D I, and printed by Dr. Luard in the, sixth volume of the *Chronica Majora*, they form for the student a volume of priceless value. And if we owe this to the fact that Matthew Paris had the instincts of a scholar and an antiquary let us do him the justice never to think of him as a mere Dryasdust, "busy as a moth over some rotten archive, rummaged out of some seldom-explored press." Lest the comparison should be an *offendiculum* we will add that our illustration is not a modern one but refers to a friend of Charles Lamb, at Oxford in the Vacation one hundred years ago.[1] But archives are believed still not infrequently to be rotten, and each age needs its Matthew Paris to copy them and write about them and thus to reconcile the interests of learning with their custodians' anxious solicitude for "the public *moral*."

[1] Lamb, *Essays of Elia*, "Everyman's Library" (Dent, 1909), pp. 11–12.

# INDEX


Aaron of York (*c.* 1250), 83 f.
Abingdon, 6, 8
Adam the Cellarer (*c.* 1160), 26, 34–6, 70, 71
Ado, Abp. of Vienne (860–75), 33, 44, 50
Adrian I, Pope (772–95), 23
Adrian IV, Pope (1154–9), Nicholas Breakspear, 26, 64, 75
Æskynges (Oiscingas), 13
Alanus de Insulis (1114–1203 ?), 80
Alban, St. († 304 ?), 23, 29, 57; his bones, 30, 74, 76; his Story, 3, 27, 29, 30, 33, 67, 76, 79
Albans, St., Monastery:
  Foundation, 23, 31, 57; buildings, 24 f., 27, 36, 39, 57, 68, 71, 75; daughter houses, 25, 40, 42, 43, 45, 46, 67, 70, 80; estates, 3
  Abbats: Saxon, 24; Wulsig, 69 f.; Wulnoth, *ibid.*; Paul of Caen (1077–93), 23 ff.; 44, 68; Richard (1097–1119), 25, 69, 73; Geoffrey (1119–46), 25, 27, 44 64, 71; Ralph Gubiun (1146–51), 26, 44; Robert (1151–66), 26, 27, 34, 71, 75; Simon (1166–83), 27–31, 34, 69, 70, 88; Warin (1183–95), 35, 39, 69 72; John de Cella (1195–1214), 38–41, 42 f., 45 ff., 71, 73; William de Trumpington (1214–35), 42, 45, 47, 69, 71, 77; John (1235–63), 71, 72, 73, 75 f.; *Gesta Abbatum*, 27, 28, 29, 34, 64, 71, 76, 77, 87; their dignity, 57, 69, 71; burying place, 27, 35; funeral ceremonies, 77
  Prior: Reymund (*c.* 1200), 39
  Cellarers: Adam (*q.v.*); Roger (*c.* 1200), 39; *Gesta Cellerariorum*, 35
  Monks: dress, 71 f., *cf.* 69 f.; food, 36, 72; occupations, 3, 28, 46, 64, 70, 85, 89; services, 57, 72, 73; cemetery, 71
  "Historiographer,": 29, 30 f., 37, 45, 65–7
  Scriptorium: 3, 24, 25, 26, 27 ff., 31, 34, 44, 63, 65
  Charters and Records, 23, 24, 36, 68, 72 f., 74, 89
  Chronicles, 30, 31, 33, 34–6. *See also* "Historiographer," *Flores Historiarum*, Wendover, Paris, Rishanger, Walsingham, Amundesham
  "Customary," 76
  *Liber Benefactorum*, 24, 64
Albans, St., School at, 73
Albans, St., Synod of (431), 57
Alcuin (735–804), 3
Aldhelm, St. (640 ?–709), Bp. of Sherborne (705), 18
Alexander IV, Pope (1254–61), 23
Alfred, King (849–901), 7, 19, 59
Alfred of Beverley (*c.* 1143), 10
Alphege, St. (954–1012), Abp. of Canterbury (1005), 59
Amphibalus, St. († 304 ?), 29 f., 33, 57
Amundesham, John (*c.* 1440 ?), 32, 42, 47

Anastasius, St. (Saec. VII ?), 5
Anglia, East, 3, 4
*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 7 f., 16
Anjou, 55
Anketill, Dom (*c.* 1129), "aurifaber incomparabilis," 73
Anselm, St. (1033–1109), Abp. of Canterbury (1093), 15, 18, 24
*Antiquarii*, 26, 44
Aquinas, St. Thomas (1225?–74), 24
Aquitaine, 55
"Architriclinus," St., 30
Aristeides (Saec. II), 54
Arthur, King (Saec. VI ?), 10, 11, 12, 55
Asser († *c.* 910), 7
Athelstan (895–940), King, 8
Athens, 52
Augustine, St. (354–430), Bp. of Hippo (395), 50, 51
Augustus (63 B.C.–A.D. 14), Emperor, 14

Baldewyn, Master (*c.* 1180), "aurifaber prae-electus," 73
Bale, John (1495–1563), Bp. of Ossory, 65
*Barlaam and Josaphat, Story of*, 54
Baronius, Cæsar (1538–1607), Cardinal, 82, 86
Bartholomew the Clerk (*c.* 1160), 35, 36
Bath, 52
Battle Abbey, 22
Bec, 9
Becket, St. Thomas (1118 ?–70), Abp. of Canterbury (1162), 70, 88, 89
Bede, Venerable (673–735) : predecessors, 3 ; sources, 3–5 ; method, 3, 4, 5, 6, 56, 65, 83 ; works, 4 f., 8, 14 ; *History*, 3–5, 9, 13, 18, 29 ; influence, 8, 9, 11 ; Wendover's use of, 13, 53, 54, 55, 58, 68 ; continuator, 6; Dante and, 1, 14
Beeching, Henry Charles (1859–1919), Dean of Norwich (1911), 37
Beer, Mediæval, 34, 72
Belvoir, 25, 42 f., 45 f., 67
Benedict, St. (*c.* 480–543 ?) 69, 71 f.
Benedict Biscop (*c.* 628–90), Abbat of Wearmouth, 5
Benedict of Peterborough († 1193), 16, 17
Beornred, King of Mercia (*c.* 758), 17
Binham, 25
Boniface of Savoy, Abp. of Canterbury (1245–70), 85
Botzheim, John von (*c.* 1480–1535), 89
Boxing, 70
Breakspear, *see* Adrian IV
Bright, William (1824–1901), 12
Britain, Brutus in, 52
Brittany, 10, 12
Brutus, 9, 52
Burgh, Hubert de († 1243), 20
Burton, Annals of, 22
Bury, Professor J. B., 82

Calenius, Walter († 1151), 10
Calpurnia, 56
Cana of Galilee, 30
Canterbury, 13, 69 ; as a literary centre, 8, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21
Canute (994 ?–1035), King, 54, 73
Caradoc of Llancarvan († 1147 ?), 11
Carlyle, Thomas (1795–1881), 17
Carmentis, 14
Casaubon, Isaac (1559–1614), 86
Cecrops, King of Athens, 52
Cedwalla, King of Wessex (? 685–8), 54
Celestine II, Pope (1143–4), 74, 75
Ceolfrid (642–716), Abbat of Jarrow and Wearmouth, 5
Charles the Bald (823–77), King of France, 59
Charles the Fat (832–88), Emperor, 59
Charles V (1500–58), Emperor (1519), 2
Chester, 21

Chroniclers, Early:
Monastic, 3 f., 14, 15 f., 21, 23–90; non-monastic, 16; importance for general history, 16 f., 18, 22, 57, 60, 81 ff., 88 f.; local influences, 8, 16, 21 f., 56 f., 67 ff.
Materials for, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10 f., 18, 34, 36, 44, 52 f., 54, 72 f., 76, 78, 82, 89; methods of compilation, 5, 6, 31–3, 38, 40 f., 42 ff., 46 f., 50 f., 55, 58, 65, 76 f., 78 f., 84 f.; chronology, 5 f., 12, 42, 47, 49 f., 51 ff., 59; preserving earlier sources, 6 f., 12 f.; difficulties, 1, 2, 52 f., 54 f., 84 f.
Characteristics: critical spirit or credulity, 4, 7, 8, 9 ff., 12, 14 f., 16, 20, 30, 51 f., 68 f., 87; desire for edification, 3, 4, 49 f., 57, 58 f., 68; desire for picturesqueness, 7, 11, 18 f., 44, 54 f., 59, 70, 71, 89; fondness for portents and prophecies, 7, 55 f., 74, 80, 86; "partisanship," 13 f. 16, 20, 81; "plagiarism," 4, 12 f., 53 f.
Clare, 4
Clothes, 69 f., 71 f.
Coke, Sir Edward (1549–1634), 19
Cologne, 12
Comestor, *see* Petrus
Constantine (274–337), Emperor, 58
Constantius of Lyons (*c.* 473), 3
Copying, 5, 46, 65
Cordelia, 52
Coxe, Henry Octavius (1811–81), on the *Flores Historiarum*, 31, 38; on Wendover, 46, 48, 51, 57; and Henry of Huntingdon, 60; methods of editing, 48, 51
Croyland, 35, [58]
Crusades, 60
*Curia Regis*, 17
*Curia Romana*, 22, 75, 76
Cuthbert, St., Bp. of Lindisfarne (685–7), 5

Danish Invasions, 12 f., 58 f.; and St. Alban's bones, 30, 74, 76
Dante Alighieri (1265–1321), 1, 14
David the Scot, Bp. of Bangor (1120–39), 15
Devil, the, 41; speaking French, 17; letter to the clergy, 58
Diceto, Ralph de, Dean of St. Paul's (1181–1202 ?), 16, 40
*Dictator*, 5, 65
Dionysius Exiguus († 540 ?), 53
Disraeli, Benjamin (1804–81), "Plagiarism" (1852), of M. Thiers' eulogy on military greatness, 54
Dudo the Norman, Dudo de St. Quintin (*c.* 1020), 13
Dunstable, 22, 26, 73
Dunstan, St. (924–88), Abp. of Canterbury (960), 17, 18
Durham, 3, 7, 8, 15, 25

Eadmer († 1124 ?), 15, 17, 18
Eddius (*fl.* 669–720 ?), 4
Edward the Confessor (1041–66), King, 27
Egfrith, King of Mercia (789–97), son of Offa, 57
Eleanor of Provence († 1291), wife (1236) of Henry III, 84
Eli, 52
Elisha, 52
Ely, 74, 88
English, use of, 15, 88, 89
Ennius († 169 B.C.), 15
Erasmus, Desiderius (1467–1536), 89
Erconwald, St., Bp. of London (675–93), 3
Essex, 3, 4
Ethelburga, St. († 676 ?), 3
Eusebius (260 ?–339 ?), Bishop of Cæsarea, his "Chronicle," 6, 33, 50
Eutropius, Flavius (*fl.* A.D. 375), 3

Evander, 14
Eve, 51
Evesham, Annals of, 22
Exile, The, 49
Exodus, The, 49, 52

Fitz Osbert, William († 1196), 20
Florence of Worcester († 1118), 15, 44, 54; and *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 8; and Marianus Scotus, 12, 53; list of Kings of Lindsey, 17
*Flores Historiarum*, suggested theory of composition, 33, 40 f., 42–7, 50; Mr. Coxe's views, 31, 51; theory of Sir T. D. Hardy, 31 f., 37, 43 f.; Walter of St. Albans and, 31, 37; Adam the Cellarer and, 34–6; John the Abbat and, 38, 40 f., 42, 45, 46 f.; Roger of Wendover and, 32, 42 f., 50, 81 f.; Matthew Paris and, 32 f., 47, 79; "Matthew of Westminster," 33, 43, 48
Franciscans, 75
Franks, 84
Frederick the Great (1712–86), King of Prussia, 17
Freeman, Edward Augustus (1823–92), 20
French, use of, 17, 70, 88, 89
Fulda, 12
Fursey, St. († 650), 3

Gascony, 55
Geoffrey of Monmouth (1100 ?–1154), 3, 9 f., 13, 30, 44, 54, 88; at Wallingford (1154), 40; his credibility, 10 f., 55, 66; influence of, 11, 33, 41, 55
George IV (1762–1830), King, 66
Gerbert. *See* Sylvester II
Germanus, St. (378 ?–448), Bp. of Auxerre (*c.* 418), 3, 53, 57
Gervase of Canterbury (*fl.* 1188), 16, 17
Gibbon, Edward (1737–94), 82
Gibson, Edmund (1669–1748), Bp. of London (1723), 37
Gildas (516 ?–570 ?), 3, 29
Giraldus Cambrensis (1146 ?–1220 ?), 40
Glastonbury, 18 f.
Godric of Finchale (1065 ?–1170), 58
Gosselin of Canterbury (*fl.* 1099), 21
Goths, 14
Gray, Thomas (1716–71), 22
Greek, knowledge of, 5, 40, 87, 89
Green, John Richard (1837–83), 81, 82
Gregory IX, Pope (1227–41), 75
Gross, Charles, 20
Grosseteste, Robert (1175–1253), Bp. of Lincoln (1235), 39
Guthlac, St., of Croyland (663 ?–714), 58

Hardy, Sir Thomas Duffus (1804–78), 21; on Adam the Cellarer, 34; on the Historiographer of St. Albans, 28–31, 36 f., 65 ff.; on the *Flores Historiarum*, 31, 43 f., 81; on Matthew Paris, controversy with Sir F. Madden, 61–3
Harrow, Becket at (Dec., 1170), 70
"Harry, Great," The (*c.* 1513–14), 89
Hasting the Dane (*c.* 860–87), 12
Hengest, King of Kent († 488), 13
Henry II (1133-89), King (1154), 16, 27, 31, 32, 41, 42, 46, 81; administration, 17, 20; Treaty of Wallingford, 40, 59; at St. Albans, 74; on freedom of election, 74
Henry III (1207–72), King (1216), 31, 47, 60, 81; and Matthew Paris, 83; characteristics of 83–4; his elephant, 89
Henry V (1106–25), Emperor, takes Pope Paschal II prisoner (1112), 15

Henry VII (1457–1509), King (1485), 89
Henry of Blois, Abbat of Glastonbury (1126), Bp. of Winchester (1129–71), 18
Henry of Huntingdon (1084 ?–1155), 16, 44, 58, 60; fondness for proverbs, 54; on Geoffrey of Monmouth, 9; story of Canute and the waves, 54
Hertford, 25
Hexham, 21, 38
"Historiographer," 29, 30 f., 37, 45, 65–7
Homer, 69, 86; contemporary of Samuel, 52
Horace, 69
Hoveden, Roger of († 1201 ?), 16
Hugh, Count of La Marche (*c.* 1220), 84

Innocent III, Pope (1198–1216), 75
Innocent IV, Pope (1243–54), 23
Isabella of Angoulême († 1246), wife of King John (1200), and of Hugh of La Marche (1220), 84
Isabella, Countess of Arundel (*c.* 1252), 84
Isidore, St., Bp. of Seville (600–36), 14, 50

Jacob, and the Angel, 15
Jarrow, 3
Jerome, St. (346 ?–420), translation of Eusebius' "Chronicle," 6, 33, 50
Jevons, William Stanley (1835–82), 56
Jews, 27; Matthew Paris on, 84
John (1167 ?–1216), King (1199), 45, 60, 81, 83; military organization, 17; and Emir Murmelius, 87
"Johannes Abbas," Identity of, 38–9, 40. *See also* Albans, St., Monastery
Johannes Hagulstadensis, John Prior of Hexham (*fl.* 1180), 38
John de Waldene (*c.* 1190), 70
Joseph of Arimathæa, 19
Judæa, 52
Julius Cæsar (100–44 B.C.), invasion of Britain (55–4 B.C.), 9
Jumièges, 13, 14
Jusserand, Jules, on William of Malmesbury, 19

Katharine, St., of Alexandria (Saec. IV ?), 26
Kenred, King of Mercia (*c.* 707), 68
Kent, 4, 13

Lamb, Charles (1775–1834), 90
Lanfranc (1005 ?–89), Abp. of Canterbury (1070), 18; and St. Albans, 24, 25
Lateran Council, Fourth (1215), 46, 71
Latin, use of, 15, 63, 70, 89
Laurence of St. Albans, Abbat of Westminster († 1175), 27
Layamon (*fl.* 1200), 15
Leicester, 52
Leir, King, 51
Lightfoot, Joseph Barber (1828–89), Bp. of Durham (1879), 4
Lindsey, Kings of, 17
Liturgical Notes, 5, 57, 72, 73
London, Troja Nova, Trinovantum, 52
London, Bishop of. *See* Roger Niger
London, Robert of (*c.* 1213), 87
Longchamp, William, Bp. of Ely (1189–97), 88
Louis, St. (1215–70) King of France (1226), 89
Luard, Henry Richards (1825–91), 48, 50, 60, 61, 90
Lucian of Chester (*c.* 1100 ?), 21
Lucilius († 103 B.C.), 51
Lupus, St., Bp. of Troyes (426–79), 57

Madden, Sir Frederic (1801–73), 61, 63, 64, 85
Magog, 14
Maintz, 12

Maitland, Samuel Roffey (1792–1866), 46
Malmesbury, William of (†1143?), 4, 44, 54, 88; works, 18 f.; critical spirit, 14 f.; characteristics of, 18 f., 20, 59; on story of Athelstan, 8; on Geoffrey of Monmouth, 12, 55
Margam, Chronicle of, 22
Marianus Scotus (1028–82 ?), 12, 14, 53
Markham, Mrs. [Elizabeth Penrose] (1780–1837), 7
Markyate, 88
Mary Magdalen, St., 80
Mary, St. de Pratis, 70
" Matthew of Westminster," 33, 43, 48
Melrose, Annals of, 22
Mercia, 17, 68
Merimée, Prosper (1803–70), *La Vénus d'Ile*, 19
Merlin, Prophecies of, 11, 55 f., 80
Monte, Robert de. *See* Robert de Torigni
Morocco, 88
Morton, John (1420 ?–1500), Abp. of Canterbury (1486), Cardinal (1493), 89
Moses, 49, 52
Mowbray, Robert de, Earl of Northumberland († 1125 ?), 25
Murmelius, Emir [Mohammed el Nasir] (*c.* 1213), and King John, 77, 87 f., 89

Neckham, Nequam, Alexander (1157–1217), 73
Nennius (Saec. VIII ?), 10, 11, 30
Neot, St. († 877), Life of, 7
Newburgh, William of. *See* William
Nicholas, Papal Legate (*c.* 1215), 73
Northawe, 74
Northumberland, 3, 25
Norway, 74

Offa, King (fifth from Woden), 17, 67
Offa, King of Mercia (757–96), 17, 67; and St. Albans, 23, 57, 73; his remains, 69
Ordericus Vitalis (1075–1143 ?), 14
Orosius, Paulus (Saec. V), 3, 33, 50
Osbern of Canterbury (*fl.* 1090), 18
Osric, Oeric, Oisc, Æsc, 13
Oxford, 90; University College, Court of King's Bench (1726), on foundation of, 19

Pallas, 14
Paris, 39, 55
Paris, Matthew († 1259), 33, 40, 41, 57; life, 64 f., 72, 83, 87; characteristics, 56, 68, 70, 73, 80, 81, 84 f., 86; " Historiographer," 66 f.; *Life of St. Alban* (?), 67; *Lives of the Two Offas* (?), 17, 67; *Vitæ XXIII Abbatum*, 27, 34, 36, 67–77, 87, 88 f.; his relation to the *Flores Historiarum*, 32 f., 43, 47, 50, 60, 67, 79–82; *Chronica Majora*, 23, 48, 49, 60, 76, 78–85, 86, 87, 88 f., 90; handwriting, 61–3; excisions and modifications, 59, 79, 84–5; attitude to " Prophecies of Merlin," 55, 80; use of the supernatural, 56, 86; story of Murmelius, 77, 87 f., 89; *Historia Anglorum*, 59, 76, 85; *Liber Additamentorum*, 76, 89 f.
Paschal II, Pope (1099–1118), 15
Patrick, St. (373–463), his " Purgatory," 59
Pattison, Mark (1813–84), 86
Paul, St., 87
Paulinus († 644), Bishop of York (627–33), 55
Pelagianism, 3, 57
Peronne, 4
Peter, St., 80
Peter's Pence, 73
Peterborough, 8, 16, 17

Peterborough, Benedict of. *See* Benedict
Peters, Dr. John Punnett, on mediæval view of Eve, 51
Petrus Comestor (Saec. XII), 39 f., 41, 45, 50
Philip II, Augustus, King of France (1180–1223), 41
Picts, 80
Pits, John (1560–1616), 31, 36 f.
" Plagiarism," 4, 12 f., 53 f.
Plummer, Rev. Charles, 4, 5, 8
Poitou, Poitevins, 41, 55, 84
Portents, Marvels and, 7, 56, 74, 86
Precedent Books, Records as, 77
Purgatory, 4, 59

Rabanus Maurus (776–856), Bp. of Maintz (827), 80
Rhenanus, Beatus (1485–1547), 2
Richard I (1157–99), King (1189) 16, 88 ; and his father, 41 ; taxation, 20 ; St. Albans' share in his ransom, 74 f.
Richard, monk of St. Albans (*c.* 1235–60), 73
Richard of Devizes (*fl.* 1189–92), 21
Richard, Prior of Hexham (*fl.* 1138–54), 21
Rishanger, William (1250 ?–1312 ?), 65
Robert de Torigni, Abbat of Mont St. Michel [de Monte] (1110 ?–86), 9, 33, 40, 49
Robert of Jumièges, Abp. of Canterbury (1051–2), 13
Robert of London, (*c.* 1213), 87
Robert of Salisbury (*c.* 1210), 34
Robinson, Very Rev. Joseph Armitage, Dean of Wells, 18
Rochester, 59
Rodricus, King of the Picts (A.D. 76 ?), 80
Roger Niger, Le Noir, Bp. of London (1229–41), 75
Roger, St., Hermit of Markyate (Saec. XII), 28, 88
Roger of Wendover. *See* Wendover
Rome, 14, 52, 71, 73, 75

Salter, *or* of Saltrey, Henry (Saec. XII), 59
Samuel, 52
Saul, 52
Saxons, 8, 13, 17, 24, 57, 69
Schools, 26, 73
Scots, origin of, 80
*Scriptores*, secular, 25 f., 65
Scriptorium. *See* Albans, St., Monastery
Scythia, 80
Selden, John (1584–1654), 47
Shakespeare, William (1564–1616), 51, 59
Shem, 50
Sibylline Books, 80
Sigebert of Gemblours (1030 ?–1112), 6, 52, 55
Solomon, Temple of, 52
Spain, 88 ; St. Alban's bones in, 30, 74
Spelling, peculiarities at St. Albans, 63
Stephen, St., " Invention " of, 72
Stephen (1097 ?–1154), King (1135), 16, 20, 37, 44, 45 ; Treaty of Wallingford, 40, 59 ; visit to St. Albans, 74
Stubbs, William (1825–1901), Bp. of Oxford (1889), 4, 17, 60
Sylvester II, Pope (999–1003), 58
Symeon of Durham (*fl.* 1130), 15, 25, 44 ; early authorities underlying his work, 6 f.

Tanner, Thomas (1674–1735), Bishop of St. Asaph (1732), 31, 36 f.
Taylor, M. V., 21
*Testaments of the XII Patriarchs*, 39
Tewkesbury, Annals of, 22
Thrace, 50
Tours, Council of (1163), 71
Trinovantum. *See* London
Trogus, Pompeius (Saec. I B.C.), 33, 50
Troja Nova. *See* London
Tynemouth, 25, 70, 80

Ussher, James (1581–1656), Abp. of Armagh (1625), 49
Uther Pendragon, King of the Britons (*c.* 498 ?), 57

Vergil, 14, 61, 86

Wales, South, 3
Walker, Obadiah (1616–99), Master of University College, Oxford, 37
Wallingford, Cell of St. Albans, 25, 40; Treaty of (1154), 40, 59
Walpole, Horace (1717–97), 2, 22
Walsingham, Thomas († 1422 ?), on a St. Alban's Chronicle, 31; *Gesta Abbatum*, 64, 67, 71 f., 77 f.; *Ypodigma Neustriæ*, 13, 50; his view of history, 50, 71 f.
Walter of Colchester (*c.* 1200), sacrist of St. Albans, 73
Walter of St. Albans (*c.* 1180 ?), 31, 34, 37
Warin, Matthew (*c.* 1190), 73
Waterloo, Battle of (1815), 66
Waverley, Annals of, 22
Wearmouth, 3, 83
Wellington, Arthur Wellesley, Duke of (1769–1852), 54, 66
Wendover, Roger of († 1236), 12, 13, 14, 19, 36, 41; personal history, 42 f., 45–7; as "Historiographer," 45, 66 f.; the *Flores Historiarum*, 31, 32, 33, 45, 46-7, 49-60, 80, 81; relation to Matthew Paris, 60, 66 f., 79 f., 82, 86, 88; details of St. Alban's history, 57; style and views of history, 49 f., 52-5, 56, 57 ff., 80, 81, 82 f.; use of "Prophecies of Merlin," 55 f.; use of the supernatural, 56, 59, 86
Wessex, 4, 54
Westminster, 27, 33, 43, 48
Wharton, Henry (1664–95), 7, 21
Wilfrid, St. (634–709), 4
William of Colchester (*c.* 1190 ?), 73
William of Jumièges (Saec. XI), 13, 14
William of Newburgh († 1198), 16; on administration of Henry II, 17; on Geoffrey of Monmouth, 10; "Father of Historical Criticism," 20
William of St. Albans (*c.* 1170), 30, 33
William, Abp. of Tyre (1174–84 ?), 60
Williams, L. F. Rushbrook, 23, 28, 29, 34
Winchester, 8, 18, 21; Annals, 6
Worcester, 8, 15, 18, 58
Wulstan, Wulfstan, St. (1012 ?–1095), Bp. of Worcester (1062), 18, 58

York, 52, 84

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